

PAROCHIALIA;
OR
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
DISCHARGE
OF
PAROCHIAL DUTIES,
In which Defects and Errors are pointed out, and
Improvements suggested and recommended
TO
THE PAROCHIAL CLERGY:

In Seventeen Letters to CLERICUS;
With remarks on a Letter containing Strictures on a
Discourse lately preached in Bewdley Chapel.

By W. JESSE, Rector of DOWLES,
And Chaplain to the EARL of GLASGOW.

Doctrinæ syntaxin in 39 Articulis, Cultum in Liturgicis, Disciplinam in Canonibus, a limpidissimis antiquitatis fontibus, pie, provide, et prudenter, præcipue per Episcopos Reformatos consignatam accepimus. Ista premunt insequentia — In his ipse fui initiatus, his subscripsi, et ab his cur vel latum unguem decederem, profiteor me nullatenus adhuc invenisse.

Prideaux.

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EPISTLE DEDICATORY:
TO THE
PAROCHIAL CLERGY:
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

MY BRETHREN,

THE letter of *Clericus* would have been unnoticed by me, if I had not conceived the idea of making it an occasion to speak my mind freely on subjects of *general* concernment, and those indeed of the greatest importance to us all. In these letters, therefore, which I humbly offer to The Public, and respectfully dedicate to The Parochial Clergy, I consider myself addressing you, my Reverend

A 2

Brethren

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Brethren, rather than the single person to whom these letters are directed. Yet, if, in this, I seem too bold, I will lessen the appearance of presumption, by assuring you that I have in view the *younger* Clergy, and those especially who have entered into the ministry without that devotedness of heart, that zeal, and that stock of knowledge and experience, which are necessary to a successful discharge of their duty. My grey hairs, and my good intentions, which even *Clericus* does allow, will justify me thus far. Whether what I have written be right, or of so great importance as I conceive, must be left entirely to your judgment. I am a teacher, by my profession; but, a scholar, through necessity. Thus much, I am sure, I have learned by painful experience, to be sensible that
I need

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I need instruction, and, to be willing to be taught. And, if any of my elder Brethren will, in the spirit of brotherly love and Christian charity, give me any corrections, or information on the subjects of these letters, I will receive them with much thankfulness.

You will observe that the doctrine of THE ATONEMENT is the great object of my zeal: and well it may be; for it is the foundation of all my hopes towards God. I am sorry, very sorry, when I think how much this doctrine is in the present day neglected, and even despised. A clergyman cannot shew any zeal for it, without being called sneeringly *orthodox* or *methodistical*. Even Bishop Hurd, for owning it, has not wholly escaped. The Monthly Reviewers found out an expression or two in his sermons, on which to in-

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dulge a sneer; and Dr. Priestley has uttered piteous lamentations, that so great a man should expose a weak side in favour of orthodoxy. I wish these Gentlemen would consider, that it is not in conventicles alone, and by enthusiastic methodists, by ignorant and unlearned mechanics, this distinguishing doctrine of the gospel is maintained; but, that Christians, in all ages, of every sect and party—Socinians and a few judaizing and philosophizing converts excepted—that a Jewell, Hooker, Usher, Pearson, Stillingfleet, Beveridge, Milton, Addison, Johnson, Lowth, and Hurd, men of the greatest abilities, of the most extensive erudition, and of the soundest understanding, have believed that THE SON OF GOD SUFFERED FOR THEIR SINS, *the just for the unjust*. Great names indeed do not prove a doctrine

D E D I C A T I O N. vii

doctrine to be true; but they may very well shelter those who sincerely believe it from ridicule, supercilious contempt, and bitter invective. And methinks, modest men should blush, when they find themselves in opposition to the sentiments of so many respectable characters; and instead of sneering at, what they affect to call, our prejudice and credulity, they ought to suspect some fallacy which may have deceived themselves. In this instance, it is not sufficient to allege, that learned men have been found on either side the question; for "*The Historical View*" of Socinianism cannot exhibit a tithe—no, nor a thousandth part of the number of men of sense, of learning and piety, on that side, which may be expressed for this doctrine of the atonement. So small is the minority, that,

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in the comparison, it dwindles into nothing. And the blessing of Heaven, which hath ever attended, and still accompanies the preaching of the cross—the great good which hath been done by it in reforming mankind—this, first, is an argument which our opponents want, and can never wrest from us.

I am not sorry that the press is open to our antagonists. Let them freely utter their sentiments.—A storm is less dangerous to the Church, than a dead calm. I would have the truth opposed, rather than lie concealed under the bushel of an unmeaning profession of religion, or be neglected through attention to other, less-important objects. If the wind be against us, even though it blow violently, we may make *some* way: in a dead calm, our

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our ship may be carried by unobserved currents into quicksands, or be driven upon rocks, before the mariners are sensible of any danger. But this, I trust, will never be our fate: if we grow secure, our great Master will, sooner or later, perhaps in the critical moment of extremity, reprove our folly, and make us know our danger. At his word, the stormy wind ariseth, which listeth up the proud waves of opposition. The very storm, which threatens destruction, by rousing us to activity, will save us from shipwreck. And, under his conduct, who sitteth over all from the beginning, though for a moment he made himself of no reputation, and who is the Head over all things for the sake of his Church, this holy Vessel shall so pass the waves of this troublesome world,

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world, as to arrive safe at last, with all her crew, and with all her passengers on board, into the haven of eternal rest.

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to HIM be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

I am, REVEREND SIRs,

Your affectionate Brother,

And humble Servant,

W. JESSE.

RIBBESFORD, near Bewdley,

9th September, 1785.

CON.

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P A R O.

PAROCHIALIA, &c.

L E T T E R I.

INTRODUCTION; ON MORAL ESSAYS.

REV. SIR,

IN chivalry, when a knight entered the lists, his herald or 'squire preceded, to proclaim his style. You, sir, have entered without your Sancho, very unexpectedly; and have proclaimed yourself THE CHAMPION OF THAT FAIR MISTRESS CHRISTIANITY. I would not for the world oppose a knight of this respectable character: but really, I doubt whether it belong to you; and

B suspect

suspect your *fair mistress* to be some courtesan, who has assumed the name of a most venerable matron.

To engage a concealed antagonist, is not very pleasant : in the republic of letters, therefore, anonymous authors are usually treated with neglect : however, to gratify the expectation of our neighbours, or, rather, to prevent any ill effects from your reproachful boastings, I will buckle on my helmet : magna est veritas, et prævalebit.

You tell me, sneeringly, that I have “ made a *formidable* attack on the clergy ” —and you say, seriously, that I “ have “ almost crucified them—have brought a “ charge against the whole body—have “ calumniated and defied the whole church “ militant ”—O Lord my God, if I have done any such thing ; if there be this wickedness in my heart, or hands ; if I have rewarded evil unto the church which dealt friendly with me ; then let mine
antagonist

antagonist persecute my soul, and take me ; yea, let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.—“ Have defied the whole church militant, and thrown down the gauntlet !” Wonderful presumption ! But, to mistake a charity sermon for a gauntlet, is as great a blunder, as was that of another famous knight ; who fancied a pewter basin to be an helmet, and a wind-mill to be a giant.

There was not any thing further from my intention, than to give offence to any of my brethren the clergy. I have done no more than relate a plain matter of fact, to account for the prevailing ignorance and profligacy of manners in the lower classes of people, and this with a design to engage the laity to promote the education of poor children as a prevention of the evil. But matter of fact, it seems, is not to be mentioned ; because, forsooth, it is not for the credit of our order—but, sir, I have always thought it more for the

credit of Christianity, and of the ministers of Christ, that these have left upon record the faults of their fellow-labourers, than if they had carefully concealed those faults, or had been guilty of that meanest of all mean things self-adulation, in writing panegyrics upon one another.

The private faults of individuals ought not to be exposed: but, if I had Constantine's* cloak. I would not spread it to conceal those which are notorious. The very attempt to do it would make them more observed, to appear more detestable, and would encourage that scornful sneer of infidels "Priests of all religions are the same." But, if notorious faults be confessed and lamented, the guilty only will be blamed; and, if those faults be pretty general, they will be imputed to the depravity of human nature, and not to our

* Constantine, in his blind zeal for the church, said, if he saw a clergyman in the act of adultery, he would spread his imperial robe over him to conceal his wickedness.

order.

order. However, I need not insist on this: for the evils of which I complained are attributed to a train of circumstances, which human wisdom could not foresee, and, therefore, did not prevent them.

You tell us, page 15, "What chiefly attracts my attention in your discourse are these words, *sermons* are dwindled away into *moral essays*." I adopt your next sentence: "As it is a matter of the highest importance to have this point clearly understood, and indeed is the *main cause* of my troubling you and our neighbours with this letter, I shall hope for a more than superficial consideration of what I have to advance on the moral essays of the clergy." You make these the chief object of your strictures; I shall, therefore, pay my first and greatest attention to this subject.

You say, page 24, "This is the first time I have seen it" (viz. censure of the moral essays of the clergy) "where, I

“ must confess, I never expected to see it,
 “ *in print*.” You have read Mr. Knox’s
 essays : then, sir, it was not the first time,
 when you read my discourse, that you
 have seen something *in print*, and *in a way*
of censure too, on the moral essays of the
 clergy. To save you the trouble of a
 search, I will transcribe a passage or two.
 “ I will take the liberty to hint to young
 “ and fashionable divines, who are in ge-
 “ neral smitten with the false graces of
 “ style and delivery, that their congrega-
 “ tions would be more edified, if instead
 “ of MORAL ESSAYS, in what they call
 “ *fine language*, they would preach SER-
 “ MONS, properly, so called, in the plain
 “ style of truth and scripture. Let them
 “ also take care, as they will answer it to
 “ Him in whose name they ascend the
 “ pulpit, not to preach themselves, but
 “ THE GOSPEL.—A general complaint *has*
 “ been made” (long before the charity
 sermon was preached at Bewdley) “ that

“ SERMONS,

“ SERMONS are become in these days,
 “ merely MORAL ESSAYS. There was a
 “ time when a passage from scripture, well
 “ introduced, was esteemed a flower of
 “ speech far surpassing every ornament of
 “ rhetoric. It is now avoided as an ugly
 “ patch, that chequers with deformity the
 “ the glossy contexture.—A professed
 “ Christian preacher, addressing a professed
 “ Christian audience, should remember,
 “ that, however beautiful his discourse,
 “ if it is no more than a MORAL DISCOURSE,
 “ he may preach it, and they may hear
 “ it, and both continue unconverted
 “ heathens.”

In these passages, sir, you have a distinction, and I think, such a one as is not without a difference, between *moral essays* and *sermons*: and, you may discern in them no small degree of censure of the moral essays of many of the clergy.

But, you say, page 18, A *good sermon* and a *moral essay* are the same thing; “ the

"difference is only in the name." An essay* signifies an *attempt*, and is a modest word to denote that an author does not pretend to elucidate or investigate his subject perfectly and thoroughly: he touches only on the principal points and without attending to exact form in his composition. The term *essay* is commonly used to denote any short treatise on any subject; and a moral essay is such a treatise on social duties. An essay, as well as a sermon, may be called a *discourse*

* Those sages of antiquity, who, from their improvements in knowledge and virtue, had the least dubious claim to the appellation of wise men, were yet too modest to assume a name which had the appearance of ostentation, and rather chose to be called philosophers, or lovers of wisdom. From similar motives many of the moderns, who have written with great skill on subjects of morality and science, have entitled their productions, *Essays*; a name, which, though it may now convey the idea of regular treatises and dissertations, is synonymous with the word attempts, and means no more than humble endeavours to instruct or to amuse. Knox.

of

of instruction: but a sermon differs from an essay in this; it must always be serious; and ought to be more formal, more methodical, more particular in the discussion of a subject, than is necessary to constitute an essay.

I never fancied that the excellence of a sermon consisted in its length, or, that any one would be a good orator for being "long-winded:" I never thought a multitude of divisions and subdivisions necessary to constitute a sermon, properly, so called: a very short sermon may be a very good one; and a long one unworthy of a patient hearing. But, what have I said, or done, to make it necessary for me to declare this? Short sermons and moral essays have been mentioned—I have contrasted the labours of our forefathers, and their subject-matter with the productions of modern divines. Theirs were full of the grand peculiarities of the gospel; ours are critical discourses, and
moral

moral essays: theirs were preached with earnest zeal; ours read without emphasis: after the example of St. Paul, who at Troas was so long preaching that he continued his speech till midnight, they preached by the hour to a people who pressed upon them to hear the word of God; we read a sort of *wall-lectures**, which, by your own confession, seldom exceed twenty-five minutes†, to thin congregations, who hear us with as little zeal as we preach to them. Now, sir, there must be some other cause, to produce this great change, than a late acquisition of taste for correct composition, or a greater ability than our forefathers had to “condense” our thoughts: and, if I

* Certain lectures read in the University of Oxford are always called Wall Lectures, because the lecturer has no other audience but the walls.

“† With respect to the sermon, in the present times, the want of merit is usually compensated by brevity.” *Knox's essays.*

have

have not rightly expressed, in my charity sermon, how this change has been introduced, I will venture to say, You cannot account for it in any other way, which will be more to the credit of you and your brethren.

I would call those discourses *moral*, in opposition to the term *evangelical*, in which the grand peculiarities of the gospel are omitted, or the absolute importance of them kept out of sight. But I do not "imagine that the frequent "mention of Jesus Christ makes a good "sermon." You may frequently mention his name, and, "especially about "Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, preach "about the death of Christ, the resurrection, divine grace"—Yes, sir, *about it*, and *about it*, and never come to the point. You may sometimes "make the great "articles of our belief the subjects of "discourse," and, alas! explain them all away: instead of insisting on them, you may join the infidel in deriding them

as

as the enthusiastic notions of "a certain
 " description of men;" you may represent
 them in such a meretricious dress, that they
 shall lose all appearance of their divine
 original; and, under the terms and
 phrases of inspiration, inculcate the
 soothing doctrines of, what is termed, na-
 tural religion. "Now have we tried
 " your spirits, said an old author*, that
 " they bee not of God, for you denye
 " Christ. That is, you denye the very
 " nature, and the propertie of Christ.
 " You graunt the name, but you denye the
 " vertue. You graunt that hee descended
 " from heaven, but you denye the profite
 " thereof; for hee descended for our
 " health: this denye you, and yet it is
 " your creed. You graunt that hee was
 " borne, but you denye the purpose.
 " You graunt that hee is risen from death,
 " but you denye the profit thereof; for
 " hee rose to justifie us. You graunt, that
 " hee is a Saviour, but you denye that he

* Dr. Barnes's supplication to king Henry the eighth.

“ is alonely *the* Saviour. I pray you
 “ wherefore was he borne? to justifie us
 “ in part? to redeem us in part? to doe
 “ fatisfaction for part of our sinnes?—Say
 “ what you will, if you give not all, and
 “ fully, and alonely to one Christ, then
 “ denye you Christ.”

If we do not maintain the true character of our Saviour*; if we do not represent and insist on the doctrines of Christianity and their importance; if we take it for granted, that they are already sufficiently known and attended to; if we preach moral duties without Christian principles; if we permit our people to rest

* Christum illi soli annuntiant vere, et ut oportet, qui in illo solo docent *omnem* spem salutis humanæ repositam: qui per illum solum agnoscant divitiæ gratiæ divinæ ad nos derivari——

— Non Christum, sed sui cerebri figmentum annuntiat, qui illum facit ex dimidia tantum parte mediatorem et servatorem hominum. Nam hoc est errare in principali subiecto prædicationis evangelicæ.

Expositio Epis. ad Colossen. per Davenant.

their

their hopes of salvation on the discharge of them, and on a formal observation of external religion; what do we less than betray the cause we are engaged, with all our powers, to support?

The design may have been good; but, the scheme, of rendering Christianity palatable to unconverted hearts, has been fatal in its consequences. To court the assent of infidels, we have been trying to make Christianity appear more rational than our forefathers represented it, who were contented to submit implicitly to the decisive authority of revelation, the bare ipse dixit of Jehovah. We have gone upon, what are called, rational and philosophical principles, till Christianity has been disguised and corrupted greatly; and, by our imprudent concessions to infidels, have increased to a prodigiously alarming degree, the enemies of revelation.

Consider, I pray you, sir, whether there be any truth in what Mr. S. Jenyns hath

hath said of several learned and ingenious writers, who would be thought the friends of truth, of reason and revealed religion.

“ Unfortunately for themselves and many
 “ others, they have with inconsiderate
 “ rashness expunged from the New Testa-
 “ ment every divine declaration which
 “ agrees not exactly with their own no-
 “ tions of truth and rectitude; and this
 “ they have attempted by no other means,
 “ than by absurd explanations, or by bold
 “ assertions that they are not there, in di-
 “ rect contradiction to the sense of lan-
 “ guage and the whole tenour of those
 “ writings.—They have reduced Chris-
 “ tianity to a mere system of ethics, and
 “ retain no part of it but the moral, which
 “ in fact is no characteristic part of it at
 “ all, as this, though in a manner less
 “ perfect, makes a part of every religion
 “ which ever appeared in the world.
 “ This ingenious method of converting
 “ Christianity into (a sort of) Deism,
 “ cannot

“ cannot fail of acquiring many respect-
“ able profelytes; for—he, who reverences
“ the name of Christianity, but cannot
“ assent to its tenets, is glad to list under
“ the standard of any leader, who can
“ teach him to be a Christian, without
“ believing any one principle of that in-
“ stitution.”

“ Under the covert way of (professional)
“ Christianity they now make their stand,
“ and attack revelation with less odium,
“ and more success, than from the open
“ plains of professed Deism, because many
“ are ready to reject the whole substance
“ of the Christian institution, who would
“ be shocked at the thought of relinquish-
“ ing the name.”

“ The writers of the New Testament
“ frequently declare, that the religion
“ which they teach, is a mystery, that is
“ a revelation of the dispensations of God
“ to mankind, which without supernatu-
“ ral information we never could have
“ discovered :

" discovered; thus St. Paul says, *Having*
 " *made known to us the mystery of his will.*
 " What then is this mystery? not the
 " moral precepts of the gospel; for they
 " are no more a mystery than the Ethics
 " of Aristotle, or the Offices of Cicero:
 " the mystery consists alone in these very
 " doctrines, which the Rationalist, ex-
 " plodes, because they disagree with the
 " conclusions of *his* reason, that is, be-
 " cause they are mysteries, as they are
 " avowed to be by those who taught
 " them."

" I blame no one for want of faith, but
 " for want of sincerity; not for being no
 " Christian, but for pretending to be one,
 " without believing. The professed Deist
 " gives Christianity fair play; if she can-
 " not defend herself, let her fall; but the
 " *rational* Christian assassinate her in the
 " dark: the first attacks Christ, as did the
 " multitude, with swords and slaves;
 " the latter, like Judas, betrays him with
 " a kiss."

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In

In the disquisition from which these extracts are taken, Mr. Jenyns seems to have Socinian authors, principally, in view. But there are others, who from mere prejudice, or indolence, acquiesce, with a kind of implicit faith, in the fundamental principles of Christianity, and persuade themselves that they are good, orthodox ministers. These expose the rottenness of their hearts, by a general silence on the distinguishing principles of Christianity—Or, if they mention them, it is evidently in an awkward manner; never insisting on their absolute importance in the œconomy of our redemption; but barely proving by argument that they are doctrines of revelation and maintained by the primitive church; and insinuating, at the same time, that they are inscrutable mysteries, about which the common people are not at all to concern themselves. The chief burden of their song is, “ If in this life we pursue a
“ virtuous

" virtuous conduct, we have a right to be
 " rewarded, and if a vicious, we may
 " expect to be punished in another, except
 " we prevent it by repentance and refor-
 " mation, and these are always in our
 " own power"—But, says Mr. Jenyns,
 " if God had informed us of nothing
 " more, this would have been no revela-
 " tion", at least, not such a revelation as
 the circumstances of benighted, guilty,
 depraved creatures require.

In my next letter you shall have some-
 thing more particular of these preachers
 of modern Christianity. In the mean
 time, I remain, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

C 2

L E T.

L E T T E R II.

ON PREACHING.

REV. SIR,

YOU complain, that I was not explicit enough, in my charity sermon: I shall therefore be more particular, and will tell you plainly what that "Something" is, which I judged to be wanting in the compositions of the clergy. You are not disposed to put the best construction on my words: I shall therefore express my sentiments by quotations from approved authors. The quotations, which I shall produce, exhibit this twofold charge against us; first, we have slighted revelation itself; and, secondly, the great object of revelation.

"Instead of the clear and beautiful
 "simplicity and authorised sufficiency of
 "the holy scriptures, Christian men,
 "I wish

" I wish I could not say, Christian MINI-
 " STERS are recommending a more sure
 " word or law of nature, formed to puzzle
 " instead of informing the understanding,
 " leading its deluded followers into such a
 " maze of error, as they can never find the
 " way out of, without the hand of grace
 " and Providence to conduct them.

" In, the book intituled, *Christianity as old*
 " *as the creation*, which is esteemed as one
 " of the most able defences of Deism, it
 " must be observed—that the author re-
 " ceived his best support and strongest
 " evidence from many passages extracted
 " from *our most eminent* DIVINES, in what
 " they have injudiciously asserted con-
 " cerning the law of nature*."

" Our modern philosophers, nay, and
 " some of our philosophizing DIVINES, have
 " too much exalted the faculties of our
 " souls. They who would prove religion

* Preliminary discourse to ELIHU, by Dr. Hodges,
 Provost of Oriel College, Oxford.

“ by reason, do but weaken the cause,
 “ which they endeavour to support: ’tis
 “ to take away the pillar from our faith,
 “ and to prop it only with a twig: ’tis to
 “ design a tower like that of Babel, which,
 “ if it were possible (as it is not) to reach
 “ Heaven, would come to nothing by the
 “ confusion of the workmen: for every
 “ man is building a several way, impotently
 “ conceited of his own materials: reason
 “ is always striving, and always at a loss;
 “ and of necessity it must so come to
 “ pass, while ’tis exercised about that
 “ which is not its proper object. Let
 “ us be content at last to know God by
 “ his own methods, at least so much of
 “ him, as he is pleased to reveal to us in
 “ the sacred scriptures: to apprehend
 “ them to be the word of God, is all our
 “ reason has to do; for all beyond it is
 “ the work of faith, which is the seal of
 “ Heaven impressed upon our human
 “ understanding*.”

* Dryden’s Preface to his *Religio Laici*.

For my own part, fir, I confess, without revelation, I have not any *sure* foundation, upon which I can securely rest. I cannot be so *certainly* persuaded of the being and perfections of God, as will be sufficient to form in me habits of piety, and to direct my conduct: I cannot be *certain* that I have a soul, or that there is a future state; that there will be a resurrection from the dead; that there is a judgment to come, and a life everlasting:—I do not know what is my own moral character; or, if a sinner against God, how I can be saved. The moment I lose sight of revelation, and begin to think on these subjects, to read or meditate upon them, in a philosophical way, I begin to doubt of them all, and feel the force of an observation of Monsieur Pascal, “The
 “ metaphysical proofs of God are so very
 “ intricate, and so far removed from the
 “ common reasoning of men that they
 “ strike with little force; or, at best, the

“impression continues but a short space,
 “and men, the very next hour, fall back
 “into their old jealousies, and their perpe-
 “tual fear and suspicion of being deceiv-
 “ed”. And, sir, I think infinite differ-
 vice has been done to the cause of truth,
 religion, and Christianity, by the attempts
 which have been made, to delineate, what
 is called, The religion of nature; to de-
 monstrate the Being and attributes of
 God, by the force of reason and argumen-
 tation; and to establish the practice of
 virtuous actions on certain immutable re-
 lations and fitnesses of things—an attempt
 which our divines have been making for
 near a century past. They ought never
 to complain of the multitude of infidels,
 Deists, Socinians, and profligates, (since
 they themselves built the nest in which
 these have been hatched and fostered)
 but should thank themselves for all the
 mischief which has been done.

Whatever knowledge of God we have,

or

or can have, on philosophical principles will ever be ineffectual. That light is too feeble to convince the judgment, too weak to warm the heart, and inspire it with sentiments of virtue and a sufficient disposition to practice it. What then can be more absurd, or more pernicious, than forsaking the holy Scriptures, in which is the most engaging display of divine truths urged upon the conscience by the commanding authority of the word of God; and substituting a frigid strain of abstract reasoning, utterly unintelligible to the generality of mankind? The simplest peasant, who knows Jesus Christ, knows more of God than a Clarke can demonstrate of his Being and attributes, by argument; and is better acquainted with the character of the Supreme Being than all the philosophers and sages of antiquity. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is given in the face of Jesus Christ: Here the whole Deity is known at once,

as

as far as man is capable of knowing him in this world. And this light is sanctifying: it changes us into the same image from glory to glory: it inspires the heart with divine virtue; and makes us move properly in our sphere; as, some tell us, the light which issues from the sun impels the earth to make its diurnal revolution.

Will you, sir, venture to assert, that the practice of our clergy has expressed the determination of St. Paul, to know nothing among their people, but Jesus Christ and him crucified? Will you say that we have sufficiently preached Christ and his unsearchable riches? that the Image of the invisible God hath been set forth in all his glory? that the people have seen his glory; and, in consequence of this, that universal acclamations of joy and triumph are sounding through our land, of Hallelujah to the son of David, of " Salvation to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, " and

" and hath redeemed us to God by his
 " blood" ? Verily, you can be guilty of
 bold assertions ; but, if you use them in
 this case, the vox populi will contradict
 you ; their practices, the prevailing in-
 flux of scepticism, infidelity, and profane-
 ness will contradict you ; Dr. Hodges,
 and Archbishop Secker too will contra-
 dict you. " I was provoked (honestly I
 " hope) to say so much as I have said
 " upon this topic, upon being assured
 " that many of the favourite pulpit
 " orators in the chief towns of Eng-
 " land have *generally so little of Christianity*
 " in their compositions, that it cannot
 " appear from any thing that is said, that
 " a minister of Jesus Christ is the speaker :
 " and the greatest character of a modern
 " polite preacher is, that he *entertains*
 " very well ; that is, he harangues with-
 " out any assistance from his bible—As
 " this vanity *threatens the destruction of this*
 " church, as it formerly did, not without
 " effect,

“ effect, that of Corinth, I thought it not
 “ improper to publish such a cautionary
 “ dehortation from this silly and wicked
 “ pride and apostacy, in hopes it may
 “ check the growth of this unbecoming,
 “ pernicious practice.

“ It is grievous to see rational beings,
 “ Christian men, nay sometimes Christian
 “ MINISTERS, mispending their time and
 “ studies in such pursuits, and teaching
 “ others by the most forcible instruction
 “ —that of example—that many other au-
 “ thors deserve a more near and careful
 “ perusal, than the inspired writers.
 “ What will be the consequence here and
 “ hereafter, of thus following shadows in-
 “ stead of the substance, of this contemp-
 “ tuous treatment of the *book of life*, is not
 “ matter of private judgment.

“ As the study of the scriptures has
 “ been *generally neglected*, and a preference
 “ given to almost any other writer in the
 “ esteem of many, who would be thought
 “ persons

“ persons of penetration and judgment,
 “ it will behove the *clergy* more particu-
 “ larly to consider, whether, they have
 “ any way countenanced this vicious,
 “ false taste. If they have been more
 “ careful to set off and exemplify the
 “ beauties of the Grecian and Roman
 “ writers, than those of the sacred penmen :
 “ If they lay more stress upon the autho-
 “ rity of philosophers and human wisdom,
 “ than upon the foundation and precepts
 “ of Prophets and Apostles : if they have
 “ been *silent upon*, or industriously careful
 “ to *obscure*, by *spreading a false gloss* over
 “ such doctrinal *principal points* as are en-
 “ titled to a *priority* of order and dignity,
 “ what will they say to their Master, when
 “ they are summoned to give an account
 “ of their stewardships”? Surely, sir, it
 will not be a sufficient justification of
 themselves, to say, that, about Christmas,
 Easter, Whitsunday, they have preached
something “ about the death of Christ, the
 “ resurrection, divine grace.”

The

The following extract was given me by a friend: it was taken from the Bishop of Exeter's * last charge to the clergy of his diocese, Sept. 2, 1748.

“ My Brethren,— I beg you will rise
 “ up with me against moral preaching.
 “ We have long been attempting the re-
 “ formation of the nation by discourses of
 + “ this kind. With what success? why,
 “ none at all. On the contrary, we have
 “ dexterously preached the people into
 “ downright infidelity.—We must change
 “ our voice: we must preach Christ and
 “ him crucified.—Nothing but the gospel
 “ is; nothing will be found to be, the
 “ power of God unto salvation besides.
 “ Let me therefore again and again re-
 “ quest, may I not add, let me charge
 “ you to preach Jesus, and salvation
 “ through his Name — preach the Lord
 “ who bought us — preach redemption
 “ through his blood — preach the say-

* I think this was Lavington.

“ ing

“ing of the great High-Priest, *He who believeth shall be saved* — preach repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”——

“The topics and principles, on which we form our discourses must be *wholly Christian*. The various motives to virtue and all goodness, which may be drawn from the great doctrines of the Christian revelation, as they are infinitely more persuasive and affecting than all others; so they should be *constantly and earnestly* impressed on our hearers. To live, as becometh the gospel, is the duty of Christians, and therefore to preach that gospel, must be the proper duty of Christian ministers *”.

Archbishop Secker mentions two sorts of people, irreligious persons of every description, and a new sect, he means, I suppose, the Methodists, who blame some of the clergy for non-residence, others of

* Bishop Hurd's Charge.

them for inactive residence, and a third
 fort for their offensive conduct : and then
 adds ; “ It is not rendering to them rail-
 “ ing for railing ; it is not ridiculing them,
 “ especially in *terms bordering on profaneness*,
 “ or affecting more gravely to *hold them in*
 “ *contempt* ; it is not doing them the ho-
 “ nour of *miscalling other persons* of more
 “ than ordinary seriousness *by their name*,”
 (O that *Clericus* had observed the counsel
 of this moderate Prelate !) “ that will pre-
 “ vent the continuance of the increase of
 “ the harm, which they are doing. The
 “ only way is, for the clergy to imitate
 “ and emulate what is good in them, a-
 “ voiding what is bad : to attend their
 “ cures, edify their parishioners with a-
 “ *wakening*, but rational, and scriptural,
 “ discourses ; converse much with them,
 “ as *Watchmen for their souls* ; be sober, grave,
 “ *temperate, and shew themselves in all things*
 “ *patterns of good works*. If the people see,
 “ or but imagine, their minister unwil-
 ling

“ ling to take more pains about them, or
 “ preserve more guard upon himself than
 “ for shame he must, no wonder if it alie-
 “ nates them powerfully both from him
 “ and his doctrine: whereas when they
 “ perceive him careful to instruct them,
 “ and go before them, in whatever is their
 “ duty to do, they will hearken to him
 “ with great regard, when he cautions
 “ them against over-doing; and be un-
 “ likely to seek for imaginary improve-
 “ ments abroad from irregularities and
 “ extravagancies, whilst they experience
 “ themselves really improved at home in
 “ an orderly established method.

“ But then, to improve them effectually
 “ to their future happiness, as well as to
 “ silence false accusers; you must be af-
 “ fiduous in teaching the principles, not
 “ only of virtue and natural religion, but
 “ of THE GOSPEL, not as *almost explained*
 “ away by modern refiners, but as *the truth*
 “ is in *Jesus*; as it is taught by the church

D

“ of

“ of which you are members ; as you have
 “ engaged, by your subscriptions and de-
 “ clarations, that you will teach it your-
 “ selves. You must preach to them faith
 “ in the ever-blessed Trinity : and vindi-
 “ cate, when it is requisite, those parts of
 “ our creeds, and offices which relate to
 “ that article, from the very unjust impu-
 “ tations of absurdity and uncharitable-
 “ ness which have been cast upon them.
 “ You must set forth the original corrup-
 “ tion of our nature ; our redemption, *ac-*
 “ *cording to God's eternal purpose in Christ,*
 “ by the sacrifice of the cross ; our sanc-
 “ tification by the influences of the Divine
 “ Spirit ; the insufficiency of our own
 “ good works, and the efficacy of faith to
 “ salvation : yet handling these points in
 “ a doctrinal, not a controversial manner,
 “ unless particularly called to it ; and
 “ even then treating adversaries with
 “ mildness and pity, not with bitterness
 “ or immoderate vehemence.

“ The

“ The truth, I fear, is, that **MANY**, if
 “ **NOT MOST OF US**, HAVE DWELT TOO
 “ **LITTLE ON THESE DOCTRINES** in our ser-
 “ **mons**: by no means, in general, from
 “ **disbelieving*** or slighting them; but

* I doubt whether the candour of this moderate
 Prelate do not suppose what is not true in fact; and
 fear that the silence, he speaks of, on those doctrinal,
 principal points, which are entitled to a priority of
 order and dignity, is in a great measure owing to un-
 belief. He, who really believes them, will feel the
 fire kindle, and speak with his tongue the things which
 he has seen and heard. “ Thy words were found,
 “ and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the
 “ joy and rejoicing of my heart.—His word was in
 “ mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones,
 “ and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not
 “ slay.” Jeremiah. — “ For Zion’s sake I will not
 “ hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not
 “ rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as
 “ brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that
 “ burneth.” Isaiah.—“ Necessity is laid upon me;
 “ yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. The
 “ love of Christ constraineth us, *συνεχει* totos
 “ possidet ac regit, ut ejus afflatu quasi correpti aga-
 “ mus omnia.” Beza.

“ partly from knowing, that formerly they
 “ have been inculcated beyond their pro-
 “ portion, and even to the disparagement
 “ of Christian obedience; partly from
 “ *fancying* them so generally received and
 “ remembered, that little needs to be said,
 “ but on social obligations; partly again
 “ from not having studied theology
 “ deeply enough, to treat of them ably
 “ and beneficially: God grant it may
 “ never have been for want of *inwardly ex-*
 “ *periencing* their importance. But what-
 “ ever be the cause, the effect hath been
 “ lamentable. Our people have grown
 “ less and less mindful, first of the distin-
 “ guishing articles of their creed, then, as
 “ will always be the case, of that one,
 “ which they hold in common with the
 “ heathens; have forgot in effect their
 “ Creator, as well as their Redeemer, and
 “ Sanctifier; seldom or never seriously
 “ worshipping him, or thinking of the state
 “ of their souls in relation to him; but flat-
 “ tering

"tering themselves that what they are
 "pleased to call a moral and harmless life,
 "though far from being either, is the one
 "thing needful.

"Reflections have been made upon us of
 "different natures, and with *different views*,
 "on account of these things, by Deists, by
 "Papists, by brethren of our own, which
 "it is easy to shew have been much too
 "severe. But the *only complete* vindica-
 "tion of ourselves will be to preach *fully*
 "and *frequently* the doctrines, which we
 "are unjustly * accused of casting off or
 "undervaluing: yet so, as to reserve al-
 "ways a due share of our discourses,
 "which it is generally *reported some* of our
 "censurers do not, for the common du-
 "ties of common life, as did our Savi-
 "our and his Apostles. But then we must
 "enforce them chiefly by *motives peculiarly*
 "*Christian*; I will not say, only by such,

* Not unjustly, as the Archbishop's own confession evidences.

“ for the Scripture adds others. And
 “ while we urge on our hearers the neces-
 “ sity of universal holiness, we must urge
 “ equally that of their *being found in Christ*;
 “ *not having their own righteousness, which is*
 “ *of the law, but the righteousness which is of*
 “ *God by faith.*”

“ It will by no means suffice to teach
 “ them outward regularity and decency;
 “ and let them fancy they have religion
 “ enough, when they come to church
 “ pretty constantly, and live as well as
 “ their neighbours: though, in some re-
 “ spects ill, and, scarce in any well from a
 “ principle of conscience. Or be they
 “ from a sense of duty ever so honest, and
 “ sober, and chaste, and beneficent; ano-
 “ ther indispensable part of morals is the
 “ discipline of the inward man. And af-
 “ fectionate piety is full as necessary, as
 “ morals can be: and gospel piety * no
 “ less than natural.

* There is not any true piety, but gospel piety; that
 is, which is not supported by gospel principles.

“ Here

“ Here then lay your foundation : and
 “ set before your people the lamentable
 “ condition of fallen man, the numerous
 “ actual sins, by which they have made it
 “ worse, the redemption wrought out for
 “ them by Jesus Christ, the nature and
 “ importance of true faith in him, their
 “ absolute need of the grace of the Divine
 “ Spirit in order to obey his precepts.
 “ This will be addressing yourselves to
 “ them as Christian Ministers ought to
 “ Christian hearers. The holy scriptures
 “ will furnish you with matter for it abun-
 “ dantly. Short and plain reasonings,
 “ founded on their authority, will dart
 “ conviction into every mind : whereas
 “ if your doctrine and your speech be not
 “ that of their bibles ; if you contradict,
 “ or *explain away*, or *pass over in silence*,
 “ any thing taught there, they who are
 “ best contented with you, will learn lit-
 “ tle from you ; and others will be offend-
 “ ed, and quit you when they can. We

“ have in fact lost many of our people to
“ sectaries by *not* preaching in a manner
“ *sufficiently evangelical*: and shall neither
“ recover them from the extravagancies,
“ into which they have run, nor keep more
“ from going over to them, but by *return-*
“ *ing* to the *right way*: *declaring all the*
“ *counsel of God*; and that principally, *not*
“ *in the words, which man's wisdom teacheth,*
“ *but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*”.

I will conclude with wishing a revival
of sacred literature, an experimental ac-
quaintance with the truths of the gospel,
and an ardent zeal to propagate the know-
ledge of them in the world.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

L E T.

L E T T E R I I I .

M O R A L P R E A C H I N G V I N D I C A T E D .

Ironia tegit sensum sub voce jocantem.

· W E S T . G R A M .

R E V . S I R ,

I T is not uncommon with some people to say and unsay in the same discourse, that is, to contradict themselves: for example, to tell an audience that Christ is their Saviour, and that they will be acceptable to God through his merits; and then to overturn all they have unwillingly uttered, or darkly hinted, on this subject, by assuring them, that a virtuous and good life will certainly transport them to the realms of bliss: that they are to be saved by faith; but, that good works are the conditions of salvation: that they should pray for grace and the assistance of
the

the Holy Spirit; and then, declaiming against enthusiastic pretensions to extraordinary inspiration, assure them, that the Holy Spirit's influence was confined to the Apostles' days; and, to be yet more inconsistent, affirming, that all men have the Holy Spirit, but that his operations cannot be distinguished from those of our own reason. Having such approved precedents to justify my conduct, I shall in this letter contradict all that has been said in the foregoing epistles, by a quotation from *The Ecclesiastical Characteristics*. And I am the more willing to do this, in charity, because it may save you the trouble of that “*intense application and care,*” which, it seems, are necessary “*to condense your thoughts*” in another letter to the Rector of Dowles. Here, sir, you have an answer to all that can be said for “*gospellers and gospel preachers*” ready formed to your hands. It contains a complete vindication of those moderate Divines,
 who

who pass through life in a sober jog trot, contented, if they do no good, that they are not guilty of doing much harm, by disturbing men's minds, in making a great bustle about religion.

“ A good preacher must have the following special marks and signs of a talent for preaching. 1. His subjects must be confined to social duties. 2. He must recommend them only from rational considerations, viz. the beauty and comely proportions of virtue, and its advantages in the present life, without any regard to a future state of more extended self-interest. 3. His authorities must be drawn from heathen writers, NONE, or as few as possible, from Scripture. 4. He must be very unacceptable to the common people:

“ These four marks of a good preacher, or rules for preaching well, (for they serve equally for both purposes) I shall endeavour distinctly to illustrate and
“ confirm,

“ confirm, that this important branch of
 “ my subject may be fully understood.

“ As to the first of these rules, That a
 “ preacher’s subjects must be confined
 “ to “ social duties,” it is quite necessary
 “ in a moderate man, because his mode-
 “ ration teaches him to avoid all the
 “ high flights of evangelic enthusiasm,
 “ and the mysteries of grace, which the
 “ common people are so fond of. It may
 “ be observed, nay, it is observed, that
 “ all of our stamp avoid the word grace
 “ as much as possible, and have agreed
 “ to substitute the *moral virtues* in the
 “ room of the *graces of the Spirit*, which
 “ is the orthodox expression. And
 “ indeed it is not in this only, but in all
 “ other cases, that we endeavour to im-
 “ prove the phraseology, and show, that
 “ besides sentiment, even in language it-
 “ self, we are far superior to, and wiser
 “ than our forefathers before us. I could
 “ shew this by a great many examples,
 “ but

“ but that it would be too tedious ; and
 “ therefore only add, to the one men-
 “ tioned above, that where an ancient
 “ orthodox man, or even an old-fashioned
 “ modern, that thinks religion can never
 “ be mended, either in matter or manner,
 “ would have said, *a great degree of sancti-*
 “ *fication*, a man of moderation and po-
 “ liteness will say, *a high pitch of virtue*.
 “ Now, as this is the case, it is plain a
 “ moderate preacher must confine his sub-
 “ jects to social duties chiefly, and not
 “ insist on such passages of scripture as
 “ will, by the very repetition of them,
 “ contaminate his style, and may perhaps
 “ diffuse a rank smell of orthodoxy thro’
 “ the whole of his discourse.

“ After all, I cannot refuse, that it is
 “ still a more excellent way, for those who
 “ have talents equal to the undertaking,
 “ to seize an orthodox text, explain it
 “ quite away from its ordinary sense, and
 “ constrain it to speak the main parts of
 “ our

“ our own scheme. Thus a noble cham-
 “ pion of ours chose once for his subject,
 “ Rom. viii. 2. *For the law of the Spirit of life,*
 “ *in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the*
 “ *law of sin and death:* which he explained
 “ in this manner, *the law of the Spirit of*
 “ *life, that is, the moral sense—; in Christ*
 “ *Jesus—, which is the sum of the Chris-*
 “ *tian religion, &c.* The advantage of
 “ this way is, that it is tearing the wea-
 “ pons out of the hands of the orthodox,
 “ and turning them against themselves.
 “ And it may perhaps, in time, have the
 “ effect to make our hearers affix our
 “ sense to their beloved scriptures; or at
 “ least, which is the next thing, prevent
 “ them from being able to find any other.
 “ —However I must acknowledge, that
 “ this way of doing is not for every man’s
 “ management; and therefore I continue
 “ my advice to the generality, still to ad-
 “ here to the rule as first delivered.

“ The second rule will be easily confirm-
 “ ed,

" ed, That duties are to be recommended
 " only from *rational considerations*. What
 " can be imagined more foolish than to
 " contradict this? If there be any thing
 " in a sermon different from rational con-
 " siderations, it must be irrational, that is
 " to say, absurd. It is in this part of our
 " scheme that we moderate men obtain a
 " glorious triumph over our adversaries
 " and despisers. Who but must smile,
 " when they hear the contemptible, vulgar,
 " ignorant, hot-headed (*Vagrant Orators*,
 " *Long-winded Preachers*) or silly women,
 " led captive by them at their will, say-
 " ing, they do not love this rational way
 " of going to heaven.

" But to explain this method a little
 " further, the rational way of preaching
 " is sometimes set in opposition to the
 " pathetic way of raising the passions.
 " This last is what we greatly disapprove
 " of: there is something immoderate in
 " the very idea of raising the passions;
 " and

“ and therefore it is contrary to our cha-
 “ racter: nor was it ever known, that a
 “ truly moderate man raised or moved
 “ any affection in his hearers, unless per-
 “ haps the affection of anger against him-
 “ self. We leave that to your vehement
 “ bawlers, or your whining lamenters,
 “ that are continually telling, they will
 “ *spend and be spent* for the salvation of their
 “ hearers, which Lord Shaftesbury ele-
 “ gantly derides, by calling it *The heroic*
 “ *passion of saving souls*. And let any un-
 “ prejudiced person judge, whether there
 “ is not something vastly great, some-
 “ thing like an heroic fortitude in that
 “ man, that can talk of future judgment,
 “ heaven and hell, with as much coolness
 “ and indifference as if it were a common
 “ matter. To say the truth, indeed, we
 “ do not often meddle with these alarm-
 “ ing themes. However, as I observed
 “ upon the first mark of a good preacher,
 “ that it is glorious to rob the orthodox
 “ of

“ of a text, and make it bend to our plan;
 “ so it is also an uncommon excellence to
 “ treat these subjects with calmness, and
 “ to prove that we ought to do so. Thus
 “ a great proficient in our way, lately
 “ preaching upon Acts xxiv. 25. where
 “ Paul made Felix to tremble by his dis-
 “ course, proved from it, that ministers
 “ ought not to raise the passions of their
 “ hearers. An ignorant observer would
 “ have thought that the passion of terror
 “ was raised in Felix, to a great degree,
 “ and that he was little better than a Cam-
 “ buslang convict. But mark the lucky
 “ expression our hero got hold of: *As he*
 “ *reasoned of righteousness*, &c. as he reason-
 “ ed, that is, argued, and proved by ra-
 “ tional considerations.

“ This example gives me a fine oppor-
 “ tunity of making a kind of contrast,
 “ and shewing from fact, the difference be-
 “ tween an orthodox and a moderate
 “ preacher. I myself heard one of the first

E

“ kind

“ kind upon the text just now mentioned ;
 “ and his first observation was, That the
 “ Apostle Paul was a faithful *reprover* ;
 “ speaking home to Felix, 1. Of *righte-*
 “ *ousness* ; to convince him of any iniqui-
 “ ty he had been guilty of in his govern-
 “ ment. 2. Of *temperance* ; which, he said,
 “ should be translated *continence*, and was
 “ probably intended as a reproof to him
 “ and Drusilla, who were living in
 “ adultery. His next and main obser-
 “ vation was, That Felix was *convicted*,
 “ but *stifled* his convictions, and de-
 “ layed his repentance, saying, *Go thy way*
 “ *for this time ; when I have a convenient sea-*
 “ *son, I will call for thee*. Then followed
 “ a great deal of stuff, which I do not in-
 “ cline to transcribe ; but it was just what
 “ the vulgar call experimental preaching,
 “ I suppose to distinguish it from rational.

“ But how contrary to this did our mo-
 “ derate friend ? He first observed, that
 “ St. Paul was a *moral*, or a *legal preacher*,
 “ dif-

“ discoursing of *righteousness* and *temperance*,
 “ without a word of *faith*: and then that he
 “ was a *reasoning* preacher, that did not strive
 “ to raise people’s passions, but informed
 “ their judgment. I was indeed a little
 “ disappointed upon consulting the ori-
 “ ginal, to find that the word used, which is
 “ *διαλεγομένη*, signifies only, *continuing*
 “ *his discourse*, and so might be either
 “ in the *reasoning* or *pathetic* way; but I
 “ was satisfied by reflecting, that the
 “ word evidently includes both, and so
 “ *reasoning* being the best, it is to be sup-
 “ posed the Apostle preferred it.

“ Agreeably to this rule, Lord Shaft-
 “ bury, and after him a bright luminary
 “ of our own church, gives an advice to
 “ all moderate clergymen, not to affect
 “ that idle title of *ambassadors* or *plenipoten-*
 “ *tiaries from heaven*, so fondly claimed by
 “ zealots: and I take the liberty to sup-
 “ pose, that the reason of the advice was
 “ the same in both, viz, *That under this*

“ character zealots put on an air of authority,
 “ and deliver their message with a pathos, to
 “ which they would otherwise have been stran-
 “ gers. His lordship indeed explodes the
 “ conceit sufficiently; he asks, Gentlemen,
 “ where is your commission? how has it been
 “ conveyed? where are the letters-patent? where
 “ the credentials? with many more questions,
 “ easier for his lordship to ask, than for
 “ SOME PERSONS to answer.

“ The third rule, viz. recommending
 “ virtue from the authority and example
 “ of the heathens, is not only proper, be-
 “ cause they were very virtuous, but hath
 “ this manifest advantage attending it,
 “ that it is a proper way of reasoning to
 “ two quite opposite kinds of persons.
 “ One is, such as are real Christians, who
 “ will be ashamed by the superior excel-
 “ lence of mere Heathens, as they call
 “ them, and whom they so much despise.
 “ The other is, our present living Hea-
 “ thens, who pay no regard to the Christian
 “ religion

" religion at all; and therefore will only
 " be moved by the authority of the per-
 " sons they esteem. It is well known,
 " there are multitudes in our island, who
 " reckon Socrates and Plato to have been
 " much greater men than any of the Apof-
 " tles, although (as the moderate preacher
 " I mentioned lately told his hearers)
 " the Apostle Paul had an university-edu-
 " cation, and was instructed in logic by
 " professor Gamaliel. Therefore let reli-
 " gion be constantly and uniformly called
 " *virtue*, and let the Heathen philosophers
 " be set up as the great patterns and pro-
 " moters of it. Upon this head, I must
 " particularly recommend M. Antoninus
 " by name, because an eminent person of
 " the moderate character says, his medita-
 " tions is the BEST book that ever was
 " written for forming the heart.

" But perhaps the last part of this third
 " rule will be thought to need most illuf-
 " tration and defence, viz. That NONE at

“ all, or *very little use* is to be made of scrip-
 “ ture. And, really, to deal plainly, the
 “ great reason of this is, that very few of
 “ the scripture motives and arguments are
 “ of the moderate stamp; the most of them
 “ are drawn from orthodox principles:
 “ for example, the Apostle Paul cannot
 “ even say, *Husbands love your wives*, but
 “ his argument and example comes in these
 “ words, *as Christ also loved the Church*.
 “ The Apostle John also speaks in a very
 “ mysterious way, of union with Christ,
 “ and abiding in him, in order to bring
 “ forth fruit, which is his way of speak-
 “ ing for a virtuous life. Now let any
 “ indifferent person judge, how this kind
 “ of expression, and others of the like na-
 “ ture, such as mortifying the deeds of
 “ the body through the spirit, would agree
 “ with the other parts of our discourses:
 “ they would be like opposite kinds
 “ of fluids which will not compound; they
 “ would be quite heterogeneous, which
 “ is

“ is against all the rules of fine writing,
 “ and hinders it from being an uniform,
 “ beautiful, and comely whole. Horace,
 “ in his Art of Poetry, gives this as his
 “ very first observation.

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
 Jungere si velit —————

“ Which my learned reader cannot fail
 “ both to remember and understand, and
 “ which I desire him to apply to this sub-
 “ ject we are now upon. If it be said,
 “ sermons are not poems, and therefore
 “ not to be composed by the rules of po-
 “ etry: I answer, it is a mistake; many of
 “ our sermons, especially those composed
 “ by the younger sort among us, are po-
 “ ems; at least they are full of poetical
 “ flights, which comes much to the same
 “ thing: not to mention that the rule
 “ agrees equally to prose and poetry.

“ The fourth and last rule for a preacher,
 “ is, that he must be *very unacceptable to the*
 “ *people.* The Spectator, I remember, some-

“ where says, that most of the critics in
 “ Great Britain seem to act as if the first
 “ rule of dramatic writing were, *not to*
 “ *please*. Now what they make the first
 “ rule of writing plays, I make the last
 “ rule for composing sermons; not as be-
 “ ing the least, but the most important.
 “ It is indeed the grand criterion, the most
 “ indispensable rule of all. Though one
 “ should pretend to adhere to all the for-
 “ mer rules, and be wanting in this alone,
 “ he would be no more than a *sounding*
 “ *brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; pardon the
 “ expression, the importance of the mat-
 “ ter requireth it. I shall put a case; Sup-
 “ pose a man should have the approba-
 “ tion of the very best judges, viz. those
 “ whose taste we ourselves allow to be good,
 “ if at the same time he happens to be
 “ acceptable to the common people, it is
 “ a sign that he must have some subtle re-
 “ fined fault, which has escaped the ob-
 “ servation of the good judges aforesaid;
 “ for

“ for there is no man even of our own
 “ fraternity, so perfect and uniform in
 “ judging right, as the common people
 “ are in judging wrong.

“ I hope there is little need of assigning
 “ reasons for this great characteristic of
 “ the art of preaching; I suppose it will
 “ be allowed to be, if not altogether, at
 “ least next to self-evident; all the several
 “ reasons that have been given for the
 “ particular maxims of moderation, con-
 “ cur in establishing this; for the people
 “ are all declared enemies of moderation,
 “ in its principles and practice; and there-
 “ fore if moderation be right, they must
 “ be wrong. There is a known story of
 “ an Heathen Orator, who, when the
 “ common people gave a shout of ap-
 “ plause, during his pronouncing an ora-
 “ tion, immediately turned about to a
 “ friend, and asked him, what mistake
 “ he had committed. Now if an audi-
 “ ence of vulgar Heathens was allowed to
 “ be

“ be so infallibly wrong in their judgment,
 “ the same thing must hold *a fortiori*, in an
 “ audience of vulgar Christians.

“ From this it evidently follows, that
 “ a popular preacher essentially signifies
 “ a bad preacher; and it is always so un-
 “ derstood by us, whenever we use the ex-
 “ pression. If we but hear it reported of
 “ any one, that he is very popular among
 “ the lower sort, we are under no diffi-
 “ culty of giving his character, *without*
 “ *having heard him preach ourselves*. In this
 “ case, fame is a certain guide to truth,
 “ by being inverted; for we detest and
 “ despise him, precisely in the same pro-
 “ portion that the people admire him.
 “ On the other hand, the truly moderate
 “ man is not only above the applause of the
 “ multitude, but he glories in their ha-
 “ tred, and rejoices in himself, in propor-
 “ tion as he has been so happy as to pro-
 “ voke and disoblige them. Of this I
 “ could give several notable examples,
 “ were

“ were it not that it must certainly offend
 “ their modesty, not only to praise them
 “ in print, but even to publish their
 “ highest virtues.

“ But now, upon the whole, as a great
 “ critic observes, that there is sometimes
 “ more beauty shewn in a composition,
 “ by receding from the rules of art, when
 “ an important point is to be gained, than
 “ by strictly adhering to them; so, all
 “ these rules notwithstanding, it shall be
 “ allowable for any moderate man, upon
 “ an extraordinary emergency, to break
 “ them for a good end.—We are well
 “ satisfied, that Mr. T——r of Norwich,
 “ and such like first-rate writers, should
 “ make pompous collections of scripture-
 “ texts, as their truly laudable intention
 “ is, by altering Christianity to reconcile
 “ it to moderation and common sense;
 “ and to find out a meaning to words,
 “ which the writers of them, as living in
 “ the

(60)

“ the infancy of the Church, had not
“ discernment enough to intend.”

· I am so tired by transcribing, that I
must conclude very abruptly.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

LET.

L E T T E R IV.

APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECTS
OF THE FORMER LETTERS.

REV. SIR,

*T*HE *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* are generally attributed to Dr. Wither-
spoon, a minister of the Kirk of Scotland,
and now President of the college of New
Jersey, in America. Dr. Wither-
spoon wrote *A serious Apology* for the Character-
istics; in which he tells us the Bishop of
London greatly commended that per-
formance, and said of it, " It seems only
" directed against a certain party of the
" Church of Scotland; but we have *many*
" *in England to whom the characters are very*
" *applicable.*" The late Bishop of Glou-
cester too, the learned Dr. Warburton com-
mended it in these words, " A fine piece
" of raillery against a party to which *we*
" *are*

“ *are no strangers here.*” I presume, these testimonies will justify the extract from this performance, which I gave you in my last letter : and will prevent a surmise that I have “ gone far out of my way” to borrow a cap, or Scotch bonnet, which, after all, will not fit our English clergy. But, be pleased to recollect, sir, Archbishop Secker acknowledged that the clergy of the church of England have “ not preached in a manner sufficiently evangelical ; that they have dwelt too little “ in their sermons” on these distinguishing doctrines of Christianity ; viz. *the lamentable condition of fallen man, or the original corruption of our nature ; redemption, wrought out for us, according to God’s eternal purpose in Christ, by the sacrifice of the cross ; sanctification by the influences of the Divine Spirit, or the absolute need of his grace in order to obedience ; the insufficiency of our own good works, and the importance and efficacy of faith to salvation.*

“ I ob-

" I observe here, with much pleasure,
 " what advantage these scripture doc-
 " trines, which were once the glory and
 " happiness of this Church, will derive
 " from a fair and full inquiry into their
 " influence and effects. These were the
 " doctrines of the reformation, when their
 " excellency was put beyond all doubt
 " or question, by their powerful and va-
 " luable effects. Many adversaries, in-
 " deed, soon rose up to contradict or to
 " corrupt them; and it is much to be la-
 " mented that they are, at present, by many,
 " so boldly and so violently opposed in
 " this once happy island. But we may
 " venture to affirm, that when the doc-
 " trine of the cross retained its purity and
 " simplicity, then was true religion,
 " including every moral virtue, seen to
 " grow from it as its fruit. On the other
 " hand, when and wherever it has been run
 " down, and a pretended moral doctrine
 " has been introduced, to the prejudice
 " and

“ and subversion of the grace of God, it
 “ has been always followed by a deluge of
 “ profaneness and immorality in practice.
 “ It is easy and common to disguise the
 “ truth by misrepresentation, or to vilify it
 “ by opprobrious titles. It is easy to pre-
 “ tend a warm zeal for the great doctrines
 “ of morality, and frequently to repeat, in
 “ a pulpit, the necessity of holiness in ge-
 “ neral. But all impartial persons ought,
 “ and the world in general will judge
 “ more by works than by words. Let us
 “ suppose, for example, the old objection
 “ revived against a minister who preaches
 “ the doctrine of grace, that it loosens the
 “ obligations to holiness of life. The ob-
 “ jection is, of all others, the most speci-
 “ ous : yet, if that minister discharges
 “ his duty with zeal and diligence,
 “ watches over his people’s souls, reprov-
 “ ing, rebuking, exhorting with all long-
 “ suffering and doctrine ; is strict and holy
 “ in his own conversation, abhorring and
 “ flying

“ flying from the society of the ungodly ;
 “ and if the effect of his ministry be to
 “ turn many sinners from the error of their
 “ ways, and to make an intelligent, se-
 “ rious, regular people, the accusation
 “ will not be received : and who will say
 “ that it ought ? On the other hand, is
 “ any minister more covetous of the fleece,
 “ than diligent for the welfare of the flock ;
 “ cold and heartless in his sacred work,
 “ but loud and noisy in promiscuous and
 “ foolish conversation ; covering or palli-
 “ ating the sins of the great, because they
 “ may promote him ; making friends and
 “ companions of profane persons ; though
 “ this man’s zeal should burn like a flame
 “ against antinomianism, and though his
 “ own unvaried strain should be the neces-
 “ sity of holiness, I would never take him
 “ to be one of its real friends.

“ Let us not, my brethren, deceive our-
 “ selves, or attempt to deceive others by
 “ plausible pretences. Let us all be zealous
 “ for good works ; not the name, but the
 F “ thing

“ thing. Let us not expect to promote
 “ them by a little cold reasoning, or af-
 “ fected flowery declamation; but by the
 “ simplicity of the gospel; by the doctrine
 “ of the cross, which will not only tell
 “ men that they ought to be holy, but ef-
 “ fectually bring them to that happy state.
 “ The leading principle of true holiness,
 “ according to the gospel, is a deep and
 “ grateful sense of redeeming love. For
 “ *the love of Christ constraineth us, because we*
 “ *thus judge, that if one died for all then were*
 “ *all dead: and that he died for all, that they*
 “ *which live, should not henceforth live unto*
 “ *themselves, but unto him which died for them,*
 “ *and rose again.*

“ I must now take the liberty to be a
 “ little more particular in the application
 “ of this subject, and to enquire, whether
 “ ministers are not, in a good measure,
 “ chargeable with the low state to which
 “ religion is at present reduced.—
 “ May I not say without offence, that an
 “ eminent, holy, diligent, and successful
 “ gospel

" gospel ministry was once the glory and
 " blessing of this part of the united king-
 " dom? But how are we since fallen asleep!
 " *How is the gold become dim! How is the*
 " *most fine gold changed!* That there is a
 " difference is plain; and that this dif-
 " ference does not lie in inferior abilities,
 " or a less proportion of learning, is
 " equally certain. I am sensible that this
 " is a part of my subject which would
 " require to be touched with a very ten-
 " der and delicate hand, and that perhaps,
 " I run as great a hazard to inflame and
 " exasperate the sore, as to bring any ef-
 " fectual cure. This is, indeed, itself, one
 " strong symptom of our disease, that we
 " cannot endure plain dealing; and there
 " is not a single circumstance, in which
 " there is a greater difference between this
 " and the preceding age. What in for-
 " mer times would have been reckoned
 " (to speak in their language) no more
 " than plainness and ministerial freedom,
 " would now be called the most slander-

"ous invective and unpardonable abuse.
 "Instead, therefore, of taking upon me
 "to say who are chiefly to be blamed
 "as the criminal causes of it, I shall only
 "affirm and lament the melancholy effect,
 "that we have in many places of this
 "church a despised, forsaken, useless mi-
 "nistery ; that many of the people have
 "gone from mountain to mountain, and
 "forgotten their resting place, while a
 "still greater number is fast asleep in ig-
 "norance, security, and sloth. Where
 "is that union, that mutual esteem and
 "affection which once subsisted between
 "ministers and their people ? It must be
 "acknowledged, that their influence and
 "authority is now in a great measure
 "lost, and therefore I may safely con-
 "clude that their usefulness is gone. That
 "the fault is all on one side, is neither a
 "modest, nor a probable supposition.
 "Should we throw the blame off our-
 "selves, what a terrible load must we
 "thereby lay upon others ? We must sup-
 "pose

“ pose and say, that under a blameless
 “ ministry, under the best and purest of
 “ instruction, one part of the nation is
 “ sunk in brutality and sloth, and the
 “ other rent in pieces by division, and re-
 “ ligion lost in the fury of contending
 “ parties.

“ We may say so, my brethren, and
 “ some do say what amounts to the same
 “ thing, but it is not credible. I do
 “ therefore, in the most earnest manner,
 “ beseech every minister, seriously to
 “ think, how far he hath given just cause
 “ to his people to despise his person, or
 “ desert his ministrations. Let us not so
 “ insist upon the ignorance, prejudices,
 “ and weakness of the giddy multitude,
 “ as if a failure on our part was impos-
 “ sible. We may be sometimes blamed
 “ in the wrong place; but we have, per-
 “ haps, as much respect, in general, as we
 “ really deserve. Do not think it is suf-
 “ ficient that you are free from gross
 “ crimes, such as blasphemy, riot, and

“unclean lust. There are many other
 “things, which, either separately or toge-
 “ther, render a minister justly contemp-
 “tible, on which no law, either civil or
 “ecclesiastic can lay hold. If one set
 “apart to the service of Christ in the gos-
 “pel manifestly shews his duty to be a
 “burden, and does no more work than
 “is barely sufficient to screen him from
 “censure; if he reckons it a piece of im-
 “provement how seldom or how short he
 “can preach, and makes his boast how
 “many omissions he has brought a pa-
 “tient and an injured people to endure
 “without complaint; while, at the same
 “time, he cannot speak with temper of
 “those who are willing to do more than
 “himself; however impossible it may be,
 “to ascertain his faults by a libel, he
 “justly merits the detestation of every faith-
 “ful minister and every real Christian.”

I mean the foregoing paragraphs as an
 application of the contents of my preced-
 ing letters. They are taken from a sermon
 entitled

entitled *The Trial of Religious Truth by its moral Influence*. You may find it in the works of Dr. Wither Spoon. There are two or three advantages to be derived from these quotations : first, I speak my sentiments more boldly than, perhaps, I should dare to speak them in my own words : secondly, my sentiments are expressed with greater propriety, and will be better received, and more attentively considered, than if I had altogether depended on my own mean abilities : and thirdly, if they prove offensive to you and your brethren, you may reject them, as a Scotch bonnet, which, however well it may fit, you are determined not to put on : and, you may rest assured that I do not mean, or wish, that any of the Clergy should wear this cap, but they only whom it may entirely suit.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

F 4

L E T.

L E T T E R V.

A N A P O L O G Y.

REV. SIR,

YOU will again be ready to accuse me of having made “ a *formidable* attack “ on the *whole* body of the Clergy,” and perhaps say, that I “ have defied the *whole* “ Church militant;” I must therefore take the liberty to protest against such a construction of my meaning as will countenance that false accusation. You do not accuse Mr. Knox of asserting, that there is not any learning in the University of Oxford, because he has exposed some evils there, which want reformation. Our Metropolitans were both educated in that University——If one of them were heard to say to the other; “ Cambridge is an “ excellent school for making good excise- “ men;” you would interpret his meaning to be, that mathematical studies are too much

much pursued on the banks of Cam, considering the short time they have to study there, who are designed for the Church: You would not suppose his Grace meant to insinuate that there is not any classical learning, or divinity in Cambridge; or that every one there is a mere mathematician—I just now recollect the names of the worthy Doctors. Ogden, Hallifax, and Hurd; whom I have loved for owning those truths, which are the joy of my heart, as much as I have revered their characters for that various learning which distinguished them in the University.

Well, sir, let me beg equal favor in the interpretation of my meaning. I would not be thought to censure the *whole* body of the Clergy. Many of them *do* preach the gospel: and, there are some, who do not think, or preach, or act just as I do, whose characters I greatly reverence. 'I esteem every degree of excellence: I rejoice to see any kind of literature pursued and encouraged; I am happy to observe decency

cency, regularity, sobriety, and good morals in many of the Clergy, who yet do not preach the gospel as they ought. I will not say they do no good: but they certainly do not the good which they might, and would do, if they insisted more on the principles of Christianity. I would not offend one of these: but there are other, and, I fear, they are not such as have crept in unawares, few in number, and therefore little harm to be dreaded from them; but who have poured in upon us, as the Germans into Gaul, in the time of Julius Cæsar, in vast numbers: of whom many have no sense of character, no idea of propriety of conduct; who preach any thing which first comes to hand; and others, (for vain are subscriptions and the most solemn engagements since Dr. Clark taught them to prevaricate) who will not preach any thing they should; who set up reason against revelation, man's righteousness in opposition to Christ's, and deny the Lord who bought them.

You

You know, fir, that it is not an uncommon practice of the Clergy, to procure a set of sermons, when they enter on the ministry totally unqualified for it, having never at Oxford or Cambridge gone through any course of lectures, studies, or discipline *properly* preparative to the exercise of the ministerial function ; which sermons they preach over and over again*

* St. Paul exhorted Timothy to give attendance to reading, &c. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." I suppose we are obliged by the same injunction, as well as by our own solemn promise, at our ordination, to "be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy Scriptures, and in such studies, as help to the knowledge of the same. laying aside the study of the world and the flesh." Supposing we do so ; yet, if we preach the same sermons over and over again, how will your profiting appear to all ?

I have seen bundles of manuscript sermons in a bookseller's shop, which he told me he got when he purchased the books of deceased clergymen, and that he sold them to the younger clergy. In this way sermons may be handed down, from generation to generation, as are the arguments, or syllogisms, for disputations in the schools at Oxford.

to

to the end of their days. And if they have not a sufficient flock for every Sunday in the year, it is not unusual to change the text, in hope that the good old women in their congregations, who mark the texts, will not remember the sermon preached six weeks before. Perhaps this is not the practice now, so much as it was a few years ago, since a Dr. Trufler has carried on a lucrative trade with the Clergy, by selling them sets of discourses for every Sunday in the year, (by which their idleness is sufficiently indulged, for it is now too laborious a task to transcribe from approved authors, or to translate from the French) which are printed in *Italic* characters, that people in the galleries, who overlook the pulpit, may not discover the cheat. How greatly are we fallen ! These, sir, are matters of fact, which call aloud for censure, and for the deepest grief and lamentation, and which justify the tears which flow while I tell the story.

I hope

I hope, sir, you have now had enough about moral essays and sermons, and will think the very slight and accidental touch of censure, in my discourse, preached in Bewdley chapel, was not so severe and unjust as you at first imagined it to be. That discourse was delivered to a mixed multitude of people of various sentiments, and I purposely avoided expressing my own judgment of evangelical truths, in order to avoid giving offence and hurting the charity: and indeed I should not think it very honourable, were I called to preach on any special occasion, if I preached any thing foreign to the purpose. Indeed I might fairly have said something more particularly of the erudition of a Christian man, and have pressed upon my hearers the principles of Christianity. Perhaps my caution was a fault: but a fault, proceeding from a wish not to offend, some will call an amiable infirmity. But you, sir, have fallen foul upon me for a discourse, which, in my

own judgment is the most inoffensive, and, in this respect, one of the most unexceptionable I ever preached. Your little, silly criticisms upon some parts of it, I think unworthy of any notice: the contempt, and sneers, and unjust accusations, contained in your letter, I do not think proper to reply to. I must submit these to Him, whose I am and whom I serve, praying Him to forgive you and to turn your heart. The best vindication of one's self against false accusations and groundless surmises is not by words, but by actions; by a steady, consistent conduct, by long-suffering, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left.

You have shivered your lance against me, and in the action unfortunately wounded yourself. The wound is not mortal, notwithstanding some *gangrenous* appearances, and I sincerely wish a speedy cure. I feel no resentment against you for this rude onset; but pity you from my heart, for the injury you have done yourself;

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self; and am grieved that a clergyman,
whose acquaintance I valued, has written
an unbecoming letter, in a bad spirit, to
his sincere friend,

And humble servant,

W. J.

L E T.

L E T T E R VI.

ON THE MANNER OF PREACHING.

REV. SIR,

THOUGH the manner of preaching be not of so much importance, as is the subject-matter, it deserves, however, more regard than is usually paid to it. There are many excellent rules for preaching, in Archbishop Secker's charges; some of which I purpose to lay before you in this letter. But as I do not mean to transcribe what he has written on this subject, in the order he has delivered his sentiments upon it, and shall not, perhaps, transcribe a single paragraph at length, or without adding something of my own, the extracts, therefore, will not, in this letter be marked as quotations.

You propose "the ancients" to our imitation: you call them our "Masters" "in the art of composition," and tell us of
the

the "intense application and care they bestowed both in writing and correcting their productions:" I will venture to say They are the very worst models we can set before us *for composing sermons*. They studied, composed, wrote, and spoke, for fame; we seek not the honor which cometh of men, but of God only: they sought to please; we to profit, others, not ourselves: their compositions were designed for men of taste, who were good judges both of their matter and manner; our business is, to instruct the ignorant, to preach the gospel to the poor, to people, who have passions indeed, common sense and natural taste, but no refined judgment, or acquired taste. A good composition, on the model of the ancients, would be scarcely intelligible to the generality of people to whom we speak. The wild fallies of our itinerant preachers are not half so absurd as a terse composition, in which the preacher has "condensed his thoughts into a narrow compass," if delivered

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livered to a multitude of common people. Frequent repetitions, tautology, barbarous language, disorderly method are not so reprehensible in popular discourses, as are stiff, abstract reasonings, which it is not possible they should comprehend. Smooth discourses, composed partly in fine words which they do not understand, partly in flowing sentences which they cannot follow to the end; containing little that awakens their drowsy attention, little that inforces on them plainly and home what they must do to be saved; leave them as ignorant and unreformed as ever, and only lull them into a fatal security. We must therefore bring ourselves down to their level*; for what suits the meanest capacities

* “ Your sermons cannot well be too plain.—The
 “ word of God is designed for the edification of all
 “ sorts and degrees among us, and should be so dis-
 “ pensed as to reach the hearts and understandings
 “ of all. And I need not say to you, who hear me,
 “ that to frame a discourse in this manner, as it is
 “ the usefulest way of preaching, so it will afford full
 “ scope

cities, may be understood by the highest ; and we ought to examine whether they take in what we say to them, and change the form of it till they do. Let it be considered that it is the concern of a parish minister to make the lowest of his congregations apprehend the principles of Christianity ; and there are not any, idiots only excepted, who may not be taught and made to understand the doctrines of our salvation ; I will not say, easily ; for it requires much attention and consideration to find out the proper methods of doing this, and much pains and patience to try one after another.

“ scope and exercise for all the talents, which the ablest of us may possess.” Bishop Hurd’s Charge.

A countryman who heard this Prelate preach a sermon in Hartlebury church, as soon as he came out of church, said to another with some surprise “ Why, this man speaks like one of us.” I suppose this countryman expected to have heard a most learned discourse, one sentence of which he could not understand. Some people admire great men for their uncommon abilities ; I admire them for their amiable, and alas ! rare, but necessary condescensions.

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And

And not only is it necessary to preach in so plain a style, that the meanest capacities may comprehend our meaning, we ought also to speak so loud that the most distant person in our congregations may hear us distinctly. There are few congregations or churches so large, that the utmost extent of them may not be reached by the weakest voice, if properly exerted, and if our words be pronounced with deliberation. Short sentences are always to be preferred: but, they, who have weak voices, should study to express themselves in the shortest possible: they should never attempt to speak a long one; for they will unavoidably fall their voice towards the end of a long sentence, so as not to be heard by half the people, who heard them distinctly enough in the beginning of it. You proposed to me "the indefatigable labour of Demosthenes," as an example for composition; I will mention him to you as an example for pronounciation: you know his

his exertions to correct natural imperfections and acquire a faculty to speak in a distinct and audible manner.

Speaking too low argues indolence and indifference; whereas an audible exertion is a mark of earnestness: and the common people are peculiarly pleased, when their minister appears to take pains about them. Yet straining beyond a due pitch will give our hearers pain, make us in some degree inarticulate, and produce a singing sort of cadence and tone. This last indeed hath been sometimes known to please weak people; but it cannot possibly make them wiser or better: and it offends the judicious extremely. We should speak to our people, as we would in conversation, when we undertake to inform or persuade a friend, in a concern of great moment; only with more deliberateness, more strength and energy in proportion to the numbers, and vary both our style and elocution, as in conversation we always do, suitably to our matter. For mono-

tony both absolutely prevents emotion, and soon deadens attention. It is worst indeed when uniformly unnatural, by degenerating into a kind of chant. But merely to be uniformly inexpressive, be it through heaviness, or effeminacy, or insignificant lightness, or want of zeal, is very blameable. Perhaps a little even of injudicious variety is better than a wearisome sameness.

We of this nation do not use, or admire much action, either in ordinary discourse, or even in popular harangues. And, were it for this reason only, a preacher should be moderate in it. Yet somewhat of gesture, appearing to be artless, and regulated by propriety, may be very useful, especially in the warmer parts of exhortation, reproof, or even argument. For to be altogether motionless, when the subject is animating, and our language perhaps vehement, seems an inconsistency; and may raise a doubt, whether we are in earnest.

The

The discourses, even of those who have the lowest qualifications ought to be, in a great measure at least, of their own composition. Else they will seldom either sufficiently suit the congregation to which they are delivered, or be delivered in the manner which they ought. And if once it be suspected that through incapacity or idleness we steal what we preach, our people will despise us, and our sermons will have little influence, if any.

We must study the circumstances of our people, before we go about to prepare an instruction for them. We ought to consider very carefully of a proper subject and text: begging God to direct our choice, and dispose us to treat them in a proper way. Choosing a text, without need, that will surprise, or a seemingly barren one, to shew what art can extract from it, will appear ingenious perhaps to some, but vanity to most with good reason. Such a text is most convenient, as will branch out of itself, into the main parts of the

discourse: at least it should be the groundwork of the discourse, and not an afterthought. After the explanatory part, proofs from reason and scripture take the next place; then inferences, if any useful ones follow peculiarly from what hath preceded; and lastly exhortations to suitable practice, which can hardly ever be omitted, and ought to be such as may leave a durable impression. An indispensable point throughout is to preserve attention: for if that be not paid, all our labour is lost. Coming to church, the bulk of mankind, even still, consider as a duty: but hearing as they ought, they partly neglect, and partly experience to be difficult. Therefore we must not only admonish, but assist them. For this end we must shew them from first to last, that we ourselves are in earnest and feel the weight of the important truths we deliver to them, and that we are not merely saying good things in their presence, but directing what we say to them personally,

as

as a matter which concerns them beyond expression. More general discourses they often want skill to take home to themselves; and oftener yet inclination: so they sit all the while stupidly regardless of what is delivered. Therefore we must interest them in it, by calling upon them to observe, by asking them questions to be answered silently in their own minds, and by every prudent incitement to follow us closely.

Still you will press them in vain to pay attention, unless you win them to it by what you have to say. And truly, the great doctrines of Christianity, plainly delivered, with zeal, and with the commanding authority of *Thus saith the Lord*, are so very interesting, that one would think it impossible for any to be inattentive. But to gain attention to these important doctrines, they must be preached in such language as the common people understand. Terms and phrases may be familiar to us, which are quite unintelligible to them:

and

and I fear this happens much oftener than we expect.* Expressions may be very common, without being low: yet we should employ the lowest, rather than not be understood. Better bear the censure of being unpolished, than uninfluencing. Our business is, not to please or be admired, but to do good: to make men think, not of our abilities, attainments, or eloquence, but of the state of their own souls; and to fix them in the belief and practice of what will make them happy now and to eternity. It is true, declining to shew reading or acuteness may be to some a painful self denial: but able judges will easily perceive,

* A young clergyman was very fond of the term Investigate, and often talked from the pulpit of the investigation of subjects: one of his hearers, a man of sense too, above the common level, complained to me that this clergyman used "high-style words," and asked the meaning of the word Investigate. Words of greek and latin derivation are generally unintelligible to the common people: even omnipotence, omniscience, and catholic, attribute, and advent, are understood by very few,

both

both that you could shew them, and why you do not.

Every part of our discourses must preserve gravity and earnestness, which ought to be inseperable from subjects of a religious nature. If we speak of these lightly and negligently, our auditors will suspect we have little concern about them: they of course will have less in hearing us: their thoughts will wander to the ends of the earth, or their attention to every thing be buried in sleep. But though languid in no part, we must be comparatively cool in expostions of Scripture, in doctrinal, in casuistical points, reserving our chief warmth for the great articles of Christian experience and practice. There our very utmost endeavours will be needful to produce in our people a due sense of guilt and unworthiness, fervent desires of pardon, love to Him who hath loved them, resignation to God's pleasure, firm purposes of obeying his laws; to caution them effectually against profaneness, lukewarmness, formality;

formality, resentment, hard-heartedness, unjust love of gain, fondness of unlawful indulgences; to inspire them with goodwill towards all men, with proportionably kind regards to those who stand in nearer relations to them, diligence to be useful in their several stations, reasonable indifference towards the things of this life, pious longings for a better. Their degree of knowledge, rank and circumstances of life, their prevailing notions and customs, will afford us much further employment to make our sermons *local*, if I may so express it; calculated to promote the virtues which they are chiefly called to exercise, and guard against the sins of which they are chiefly in danger. We must urge them to use the means of doing their duty, which must be pointed out to them: avoiding temptations, keeping clear of bad company, contracting friendships with serious and prudent persons, reading good books, studying the bible, and begging, in private prayer, *grace to help in time of need*;

need; not strictly confining their devotions to any forms, though forms are very useful, but varying them according to their spiritual condition. These are things, on which we must insist with our whole force: not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Were the most serious emotions raised by mere mechanical vehemence, they would be unfairly raised: and what is beyond nature will usually soon subside; perhaps with scorn, upon reflection, of what was admired when heard. Or supposing such admiration to continue, bad effects may as possibly follow as good: whereas warmth of affection, excited to a proper degree by the rational enforcement of solid arguments, promises to be durable, and will never do harm. The faculty of moving hearers thus, is a most valuable blessing. And such as have but little of it, may considerably improve it; by labouring to affect themselves deeply with what they would say; and thinking what
methods

methods of saying it will be most persuasive.

But a fervent desire of being useful will teach us more than any particular directions can, upon every head. Without this desire, a clergyman will either be negligent; or if he would seem zealous, will be detected for want of uniformity and perseverance. Therefore make sure first that all be right within, and *out of the good treasure of the heart you will bring forth good things*, naturally and prudently, and, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, effectually. It is not easy indeed even to instruct the willing; much less to convince the unwilling, and reform the wicked. But still these are the purposes, for which we are God's embassadors: and we must try with indefatigable perseverance every way to execute our commission.

Lest you should imagine that I take pleasure in censuring the clergy, I shall only just hint that, in general, the clergy pay no regard, or very little, to the man-

ner in which their discourses are delivered, and that those among them who compose their sermons seem to study to please " the more sensible part of their congregations," rather than to edify the more numerous, but more ignorant and less judicious. *We are debtors both to the wise and to the unwise:* and we should never spend so much of our attention on the higher part of the world, as to give the least suspicion of neglecting the lower, whose number is so much larger, whose dispositions are usually so much more favourable to religion, and whose eternal happiness is of equal importance to them, and ought to be of equal concern to us: but we must prove we are in earnest in our work, by making it our care, as it was our Master's, that *the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

L E T-

L E T T E R VII.

ON EXTEMPORE PREACHING.

REV. SIR,

YOU accuse me of “stepping far out
 “of my way, &c.” I apprehend, that,
 in what you allude to, I have not digressed
 from my subject, or mentioned any thing
 which has not a proper connection with
 the purpose of my discourse. But, sir,
 you have certainly done the very thing
 which you blame in me, in several in-
 stances; and particularly, in what you
 have said about *extempore preaching*.

“ In other men we faults can spy,
 “ And blame the mote which dims their eye;
 “ Each little speck and blemish find,
 “ To our own greater errors blind.”

If our church had obliged her ministers
 to write their discourses, and to read
 them; and if I had voluntarily laid my-
 self under an obligation, by subscription
 or

or oath, to preach none but written sermons there would then have been some ground for an expostulation on extempore preaching. But as the matter stands, any degree of censure from you, on this subject, is—I will not say very impertinent; but, meddling with what does not at all concern you. Archbishop Secker with more liberality of sentiment, concludes on the subject of preaching, in the following words; “ But after all, *every man*, as the “ Apostle saith on a different occasion, *hath* “ *his proper gift of God; one after this manner,* “ *another after that*: let each cultivate his “ own; and no one censure or despise his “ brother.”

If by extempore preaching you mean haranguing on a subject which the preacher is not well acquainted with, which he has not previously studied, upon which he has not digested his thoughts, or arranged his ideas, and has not a sufficient command of language to express his sentiments readily; this is a preach-

H

ing

ing which you may censure, if you please; but I beg you will not expostulate with me on this subject, for I am no advocate for it. I think indeed, that the ministers of Christ, ought to be so well acquainted with the analogy of faith and the great duties of Christianity, as to able at all times to discourse upon them with propriety. And I cannot think it a more difficult thing to do this, than it would be to you to harangue for half an hour in a coffee-room on the American war, or on the subject of taxation. But they who have this faculty, and have a mind to use it frequently, should not be contented with a certain stock of knowledge: they must apply themselves diligently to their studies, and especially to the study of the Scriptures; they must carefully watch over their own hearts, and those of their parishioners, in order to increase their stock of knowledge and improve their talents: otherwise they will be guilty of the same fault which is imputed to them who are

con-

continually reciting the same set of written discourses: for though such extempore preachers vary their texts and their words, it is not possible they should vary their matter, without constant application to the study of books and men. When a person has gotten a faculty to speak plausibly and tolerably well on some subjects (if he be of an indolent disposition and dislikes close application) there is great danger of being tempted to neglect the improvement of his understanding, and to be contented with digressing, whenever he is at a loss, from his text and subject, to any point on which he can be copious.

Perhaps you would call it *extempore preaching*, if, after previous study, and drawing out a scheme of a sermon on any text of scripture, I were so "bold" to go into the pulpit with this scheme only, depending on the assistance and blessing of Jesus my Master. This kind of extempore preaching I wish to be generally in use: and I the less hesitate to express

this with, because the practice stands recommended by persons to whose judgment, in this matter, I pay no small degree of deference. The practice is recommended by the example of Dr. Clarke. Archbishop Secker, observed, in one of his charges, that it is one objection against reading sermons that it prevents the use of proper action in the delivery, and he adds, "there are several objections besides." One I suppose to be this; when a clergyman has gotten a stock of sermons, he will be too apt to indulge an indolent, idle disposition, and preach his sermons over and over again, without any variation. From whence it will follow, that there will not be any improvement in the light and grace of his parishioners. The Archbishop seemed to disapprove of confining ourselves servilely to our notes, even when our sermons are written out and lie before us. "What we say in such manner as to make it seem the present dictate of our hearts, will much better make

“ make its way into the hearts of others,
 “ than if our eyes are fixed all the while
 “ on a paper, from which we visibly recite
 “ the whole. It will ordinarily be ut-
 “ tered too with more disengaged freedom
 “ and livelier spirit. The preacher also
 “ will be abler to enforce his words by
 “ significant looks: to perceive from the
 “ countenances of his hearers, what they
 “ comprehend, and by what they are
 “ moved: and may accordingly enlarge
 “ on that head, or proceed to another, as
 “ he finds cause.”

Between reading sermons and preaching
 extempore, “ there is a middle way used
 “ by our predecessors, of setting down in
 “ short notes, the method and principal
 “ heads, and enlarging on them in such
 “ words as present themselves at the time.
 “ Perhaps, duly managed, *this would be the*
 “ *best*.” This, sir, was the practice of
 Bishop Bull. Nelson, in his life of this
 prelate, gives the following account of his

* Secker.

preaching; which I gladly transcribe, as the practice is fully justified by that pious man, whom you cannot suspect of an intention to favour “ a certain description “ of men.”

“ It was but seldom, and that upon “ some extraordinary occasions, that he “ (Bishop Bull) composed his sermon “ entire and committed it to writing. “ His usual method was, after the choice “ of his text, to mark some words that “ were to be explained, in order to give “ the true sense of that portion of scripture, and then writ down some observations, which flowed naturally from the “ subject, and under each observation “ hints to illustrate it, and texts of scripture proper to be explained in order to “ give light to it, and then drew inferences “ from his whole discourse by way of application. Thus he had only the “ scheme of his sermon before him in “ writing, and having in this manner “ secured the substance of it, he did by “ custom

" custom and practice bring himself to a
 " great readiness and fluency in expres-
 " sing himself upon all subjects; and if
 " this manner of preaching wanted the
 " exactness of more studied composures, it
 " had the advantage of that popular style,
 " which by *good judges*, hath been thought
 " the *fittest* for the pulpit; from whence,
 " if men design to influence and persuade
 " the generality of their hearers, they must
 " condescend to use *more words* than are
 " necessary in a strict sense; the same
 " thing must be *repeated often*, and turned
 " after a different manner, and inculcated
 " with force, so that fresh and lasting im-
 " pressions may be made upon the audi-
 " ence. What Mr. Bull delivered of this
 " kind, never wanted in becoming fervour,
 " and he enlivened his discourses with
 " proper and decent gestures; and his
 " voice was always exerted with some ve-
 " hemency, whereby he kept the audience
 " awake, and raised their attention to
 " what he delivered; and persuaded the

“ people that he was in earnest, and affect-
 “ ed himself with what he recommended
 “ to others. By these means he laboured
 “ many years in teaching the ignorant,
 “ in confirming the weak, in quieting the
 “ scrupulous, in softening the hard heart,
 “ in rousing the sinner; and in raising the
 “ pious soul to a steady and vigorous per-
 “ suit of eternal happiness. And what-
 “ ever he delivered, his words were gene-
 “ rally fixt in the minds of his hearers, as
 “ they parted from his own full of warmth
 “ and heat.”

Though I approve this method of preach-
 ing, which was practised by Bishop Bull,
 of studying the subject, and planning the
 method of our sermons, and then setting
 down in short notes the several heads and
 proofs of the doctrines we would insist
 upon, and then enlarging in the pulpit
 in words which present themselves on the
 occasion, I am no enemy to written
 sermons, especially when they come fresh
 from the mint, and are peculiarly suited

to present occasions, as my own practice sufficiently proves. I abhor all disguises, especially in what relates to religion; and therefore express my sentiments with the same freedom with which I expect you will censure them, if they do not meet your approbation. And I assure you, sir, that I shall not be in the least degree offended, if you, or any other, shall either contradict or censure any thing advanced in these letters; only I wish it may be done without scoffs, or sneers, or fallacious innuendoes. Preserve a good temper, and I shall remain entirely, though we disagree in sentiment,

Your sincere friend,

W. J.

LET-

L E T T E R VIII.

THE PIOUS HERBERT'S COUNTRY
PARSON PREACHING.

REV. SIR,

I HAVE felt some uneasiness, while I have been writing these letters, lest you should think I presume to address them to you for *your* instruction. If my learning were much greater than it is, I could not expect that a person prejudiced against me, and who has expressed much contempt of my abilities, will be capable of receiving instruction from my pen. I have felt the same uneasiness, fearing it may be thought that I pretend to dictate to "the whole body of the Clergy." Many of them are greatly my superiours; compared with whom, I am as a dwarf to a giant. These, like the vessels belonging to our India company, are returned from the East deeply laden with the richest commodities:

dities : or, resembling a grand fleet of men of war, with crouded sails majestic, they launch into the deep, and pour forth all their thunder against the enemies of our church and state : I, like a coasting bark, carry corn to the necessitous ; or, as a sloop or frigate at best, watch the motions of the enemy, and repeat* the signals of the fleet. But when I consider, that we have no schools which afford sufficient instructions to prepare us for the ministry, I conceive there are many clergymen who *would* compose their own sermons, if they knew how to do it. It is for these I write : and I hope the following transcript, from a book which has pleased me much, may be found useful to them. It is entitled *The Country Parson*, written by the pious George Herbert, brother to lord Herbert of Cherbery, in whose mansion I now dwell.

“ The country parson preacheth constantly ; the pulpit is his joy and his

* Alluding to the quotations in these letters.

“ throne : if he at any time intermit, it
 “ is either for want of health, or against
 “ some festival, that he may the better
 “ celebrate it, or for the variety of the
 “ hearers, that he may be heard at his
 “ return more attentively. When he in-
 “ termits, he is ever very well supplied
 “ by some able man, who treads in his
 “ steps, and will not throw down what he
 “ hath built ; whom also he intreats to
 “ press some point, that he himself hath
 “ often urged with no great success, that
 “ so in the mouth of two or three witnesses
 “ the truth may be more established.—
 “ When he preacheth, he procures atten-
 “ tion by all possible art, both by earnest-
 “ ness of speech, it being natural to men
 “ to think, that where is much earnest-
 “ ness, there is somewhat worth hearing ;
 “ and by a diligent and busy cast of his
 “ eye on his auditors, with letting them
 “ know that he observes who marks, and
 “ who does not ; and with particularizing
 “ of his speech now to the younger sort,
 “ then

“ then to the elder, now to the poor, and
“ now to the rich. This is for you, and
“ This for you; for particulars ever touch
“ and awake more than generals. Here-
“ in also he serves himself of the judgments
“ of God, as of those of ancient times, so
“ especially of the late ones; and those
“ most, which are nearest to his parish; for
“ people are very attentive at such dis-
“ courses, and think it behoves them to
“ be so, when God is so near them, and
“ even over their heads. Sometimes he
“ tells them stories, and sayings of others,
“ according as his text invites him; for
“ them also men heed, and remember
“ better than exhortations; which though
“ earnest, yet often die with the sermon,
“ especially with country people; which
“ are thick, and heavy, and hard to raise
“ to a point of zeal and fervency, and
“ need a mountain of fire to kindle them;
“ but stories and sayings they will re-
“ member. He often tells them, that ser-
“ mons are dangerous things, that none
“ goes

“ goes out of the church as he came in,
 “ but either better, or worse; that none is
 “ careless before his judge, and that the
 “ word of God shall judge us. By these
 “ and other means the parson procures
 “ attention: but the character of his ser-
 “ mon is holiness: he is not witty, or
 “ learned, or eloquent, but holy. A cha-
 “ racter, that Hermogenes never dreamed
 “ of, and therefore he could give no pre-
 “ cept thereof. But it is gained, first, by
 “ choosing texts of devotion, not controver-
 “ sy, moving and ravishing texts, where-
 “ of the Scriptures are full. Secondly, by
 “ dipping, and seasoning all our words
 “ and sentences in our hearts, before they
 “ come into our mouths, truly affecting,
 “ and cordially expressing all that we say;
 “ so that the auditors may plainly per-
 “ ceive that every word is heart-deep.
 “ Thirdly, by turning often, and making
 “ many apostrophes to God, as Oh Lord,
 “ bless my people, and teach them this
 “ point; or, Oh my Master, on whose
 “ errand

" errand I come, let me hold my peace,
 " and do thou speak thyself; for thou
 " art Love, and when thou teachest, all
 " are scholars. Some such irradiations
 " scatteringly in the sermon, carry great
 " holiness in them. The prophets are
 " admirable in this. So Isa. 64. *Oh that*
 " *thou wouldest rent the heavens, that then*
 " *wouldest come down, &c.* And Jer. c. 10.
 " after he had complained of the desola-
 " tion of *Israel*, turns to God suddenly,
 " *Oh Lord! I know that the way of man is not*
 " *in himself, &c.* Fourthly, by frequent
 " wishes of the people's good, and joying
 " therein, though he himself were with
 " St. Paul even sacrificed upon the fer-
 " vice of their faith. For there is no
 " greater sign of holiness, than the pro-
 " curing and rejoicing in another's good.
 " And herein St. Paul excelled in all his
 " epistlēs. How did he put the Romans
 " in all his prayers? *Rom. i. 19.* And
 " ceased not to give thanks for the
 " Ephesians. *Eph. i. 16.* And for the
 " Corin-

“ Corinthians, chap. i. 4. And for the
 “ Philippians made request with joy,
 “ *chap. i. 4.* And is in contention for
 “ them whether to live or die; be with
 “ them, or Christ, *vers. 23.* which, set-
 “ ting aside his care of his flock, were
 “ a madness to doubt of. What an
 “ admirable epistle is the second to the
 “ Corinthians? how full of affections?
 “ he joys, and he is sorry, he grieves,
 “ and he glories: never was there such
 “ a care of a flock expressed, save in the
 “ great Shepherd of the fold; who first
 “ shed tears over Jerusalem, and after-
 “ wards blood. Therefore this care may
 “ be learned there, and then woven into
 “ sermons, which will make them appear
 “ exceedingly reverend and holy. Lastly,
 “ by an often urging of the presence
 “ and majesty of God, by these, or such
 “ like speeches. Oh let us take heed
 “ what we do! God sees us: he sees
 “ whether I speak as I ought, or you hear
 “ as you ought: he sees hearts as we see
 faces:

" faces: he is among us; for if we be
 " here, he must be here, since we are
 " here by him, and without him could
 " not be here. Then turning the dis-
 " course to his majesty, And he is a great
 " God, and terrible; as great in mercy,
 " so great in judgment. There are but
 " two devouring elements, fire and water;
 " he hath both in him; *His voice is as the*
 " *sound of many waters; Rev. 1. And, He*
 " *himself is a consuming fire. Heb. 12.*
 " Such discourses shew very holy.

" The Parson's method in handling of
 " a text, consists of two parts: First, a
 " plain and evident declaration of the
 " meaning of the text; and secondly, some
 " choice observations drawn out of the
 " whole text, as it lies entire, and unbroken
 " in the Scripture itself. This he thinks
 " natural, and sweet, and grave. Where-
 " as the other way of crumbling a text
 " into small parts, as, the person speaking,
 " or spoken to, the subject, and object,
 " and the like, have neither in it sweetness,

I

" nor

“ nor gravity, nor variety; since *the words*
 “ *apart are not Scripture, but a dictionary,*
 “ and may be considered alike in all the
 “ Scripture. The parson exceeds not an
 “ *hour* in preaching, because *all ages have*
 “ *thought that* a competency; and he that
 “ profits not in that time, will less after-
 “ wards; the same effect which made
 “ him not profit before, making him then
 “ weary; and so he grows from not re-
 “ lishing, to loathing.”

What would Mr. Herbert think could
 he look out of his grave, and see, and
 hear one of our modern divines proving
 by abstract reasonings the Being of God,
 delivering an uninteresting, critical dis-
 course, or a mere moral lecture, in which
 some political duty is enforced by the rea-
 son and fitness of things? or could he see
 and hear one of our fops, or beaux, with
 hair elegantly ekempt, by a hair-dresser
 on a Sunday morning, displaying a white
 handkerchief, and declaiming in what is
 called *fine language*, for ten, fifteen or
 twenty

twenty minutes! Tempora mutantur, et nos—You will recollect, sir, that the title of the book from which the above extract is taken, is *The country Parson*. And, I am persuaded, if our country parsons, and city parsons too, were to preach agreeably to Herbert's description, they would be more useful than they are, and be more approved of God and men, than if they studied the ancients as their masters in the art of composition. Demosthenes, Tully, and Pliny, you should have mentioned Aristotle too, the father of critics, may teach you to preach for fame; but Mr. Herbert, to save many precious souls from eternal ruin, and to make a grateful people love you.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

I 2

L E T.

L E T T E R IX.

ON THE NAME OF JESUS.

REV. SIR,

SOME expressions in your letter grieve me exceedingly. They look very much like sneers at the only name whereby we can be saved. Look at them again, and "bow your head, and blush;" yea, bow your knee, and adore the name of Jesus: for "as I live, saith the Lord, unto me
 " every knee shall bow, every tongue shall
 " swear. Surely shall one say, In the
 " Lord have I righteousness and strength:
 " even to Him shall men come, and all
 " that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of
 " Israel be justified, and shall glory."

The expressions I allude to, are these:
 " Some talk in every page of Jesus Christ,
 " sweet Jesus, &c. &c. We have heard of
 " gossellers and gospel preachers, who ima-
 " gine

"gine that the frequent mention of
"Jesus Christ makes a good sermon."—

Now, sir, though the frequent mention
 of that adorable name does *not* make a
 good sermon, it certainly may *Christi-*
anize a sermon. Whatever virtue you
 preach, if it be not a Christian virtue,
 that is, if the practice of it be not enforced
 by the name of Jesus Christ, your sermon
 is not only not a good one, but is a mere
moral essay, or what it should not be.*.

"Other foundation can no man lay, than
 "that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Neither is there salvation in any other;

"for there is none other name given

"among men, whereby we must be saved."

"An explanation of the advantages, ob-

"ligation, and extent of some moral du-

"ty" may be a good composition, yet not

* Cavendum est in proponendi legis doctrinæ,
 ne hominum mentes in ea sistantur, quasi possent sa-
 lutem in ejusdem observatione invenire, sed per legis
 severitatem ad Christi misericordiam sunt producendi.

Davenant.

a good sermon; for the preacher may insist on what are called *natural obligations*, and forget the Christian principle of faith in Christ. But take, for your subject, *charity*; and shew “the advantages, obligation, and extent” of this grace and duty; explain its genealogy; derive it as the Apostle did*, from a pure heart; and *this* from a good conscience; and shew how the conscience of a sinful man can be purged only by faith in the crucified Saviour—Let charity herself inspire and animate your soul, while you describe her to your audience, and I ween, your people will be astonished at your doctrine, and hardly believe their own eyes, when they tell them, This is the very man, who asked Whether two or three of the moral papers from the Spectator would not be a true gospel sermon.

If any people admire a sermon merely because Jesus Christ is frequently mention-

* 1 Tim. i. 5. See Bishop Hurd's sermon on this text.

ed in it, insensible of a thousand faults, which may be in the sermon, for the sake of precious ore, which lies amidst unconnected sands, or in a muddy channel; instead of laughing at their simplicity, and despising them as enthusiastic fools, I will esteem their truly Christian taste*. St. Paul had this taste to a very great degree; "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He was like a man, who had looked so long at the glorious splendour of the sun, that he could see no other object — but Jesus Christ. He could scarcely write a sentence without a glowing regard to this name. How frequently do you find a repetition of it in all his epistles? In the compass of five or six

* I acknowledge that many good Christians may have expressed themselves improperly; I am not concerned to vindicate their phrases,

short sentences, in the beginning of the first epistle to the Corinthians, you may find the name repeated so often as eleven times; a more frequent repetition this, than is to be paralleled in any modern discourse.

Before his conversation, St. Augustine had an enthusiastic fondness for the works of Cicero. Cicero was seldom out of his hands; and, when he went to bed, Cicero accompanied him, and was laid upon his pillow to meet his opening eyes at the returning dawn of day. But, when he had read of Jesus, so much was he changed into the Christian taste, that Cicero lay by neglected: Being asked the reason, why now he never read his once favourite author, he replied, *Non est aliquid Christi.*

And what is there, which disgusts you, in the epithet *sweet*? “ Sweet Jesus.”—What is there more improper in it, than in the epithet *precious*, which Peter loved to use—“ Precious Christ; Precious faith; “ Precious promises.” The Psalmist tells us, that the word of God was sweeter to his

his soul, than the honey on which you breakfast, is to the taste; and, I suppose, the reason to have been, because the object of that word was most exceedingly sweet unto him.

So afraid are we grown of enthusiasm, that religious affections are regarded with a jealous eye: as if reason alone were baptized, and our *passions* to remain in a Pagan state. *Rational Christianity*, as it is called, which is nothing else than a proud affectation of philosophic wisdom, has almost thrust out of the Church that faith which worketh by love. Before we look into the bible, we must form our creed out of Aristotle; and then look into it only to twist its meaning to favour preconceived opinions. Instead of that charity, which panteth after God, as the hunted stag for the water-brooks; which rejoiceth in the name of Jesus; which looks, and longs, and labours for the conversion of men, and knits in bonds of closest amity each faithful soul to other faithful souls;

souls; we sons of reason profess a cold respect and reverence for the Deity, and a virtue called humanity, a favourable opinion of the state of *well-meaning* Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, excepting only those of "a certain description." It is reckoned a mark of a disposition hostile to mankind; a mark of a narrow bigotted spirit, to believe that a heathen cannot be in a state of salvation, that is, cannot be "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," without faith in Christ; and that they, who hear the gospel and do not believe in the Son of God, will not finally partake of everlasting salvation. A man shall be zealous for his country's weal, and be allowed to talk incessantly with enthusiastic ardour of a Chatham, or a Washington, but not a word, or only in a frigid strain of argumentation, of the Saviour of a fallen world.

The primitive Church was not destitute of learned men, who understood the principles

ciples of philosophy and the art of reasoning, as well as any modern divine: but that which marked the character of the primitive Christians in general was zeal and love; not what was in their heads, at least not the ornamental parts of learning, but what was in their hearts, and which was so expressed in their holy lives as to evidence plainly, whence their light was derived. The name of Jesus was like the spikenard, when Mary broke her precious box: it filled the Church with its rich perfume. And truly, sir, I willingly confess the weakness, if it be a weakness, which you seem to condemn. The name of Jesus is sweet unto my soul: O et præsidium et *dulce* decus meum !

When with his name I'm charm'd in song,
I with myself all ear and tongue.

O it came o'er my ear, like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets —

But —————

Whom see I yonder, so demurely smile?
Ye Quietists, in homage to the skies !

Who

————— Who calmly make
 An unobtrusive tender of your hearts,
 Abhorring violence! who halt indeed;
 But for the blessing, wrestle not with Heav'n!
 If Christ our theme, 'tis impious to be calm,
 Passion is reason, transport temper, here.
 Shall Heav'n, which gave us ardor, and has shewn
 Her own for man so strongly, not disdain
 A prose of piety, a lukewarm praise?
 Rise odours sweet from incense uninflam'd;
 Devotion, when lukewarm, is undevout. Young.

You will not say, whatever you may
 think, that the epistle of Ignatius to the
 Roman Christians is an enthusiastic rhapsody.
 What expressions are there, of affectionate zeal for Jesus Christ! "Now I
 "begin to be a disciple: Nor shall any
 "thing move me, whether visible or
 "invisible, that I may attain to Jesus
 "Christ. Let fire, and the cross; let the
 "rage of wild beasts; let breakings of
 "bones, and tearing of members; let the
 "shattering in pieces of the whole body,
 "and all the wicked torments of the devil
 "come upon me; only let me enjoy Jesus
 "Christ.

" All

" All the ends of the world, and the
 " kingdoms of it, will profit me nothing:
 " I would rather die for Jesus Christ, than
 " rule to the utmost ends of the earth.
 " Him I seek, who died for us: Him I
 " desire that rose again for us.—Permit
 " me to imitate the passion of my God.
 " If any one has him within himself, let
 " him consider what I desire; and let him
 " have compassion on me, as knowing
 " how I am straitened.—My love is
 " crucified."—

Bishop Kenn has been stiled The se-
 raphic Kenn; but I never heard him ac-
 cused of enthusiasm. He too talked al-
 most in every page, in his devotional ex-
 planation of the catechism, of Jesus
 Christ: that name was as *sweet* to him as
 it is to *some* whom you sneer at as *gospel-*
lers and *gospel preachers*. " I believe in
 " thee, O Jesus, and I rejoice in that
 " dear name which is so full and expressive
 " of thy love. Thou art Jesus our Sa-
 " viour, because thou camest into the
 " world

" world on purpose to save us from our
 " sins. All love, all glory be to thee.
 " O be thou ever Jesus to me: O let me
 " feel the kind force of that *sweet* name, in
 " which I, and all sinners do read our
 " danger, and our deliverance, our guilt
 " and our salvation. O most benign
 " Jesus! He well deserves to be accursed
 " that does not love thee: who, Lord, can
 " ever hope to share in thy salvation, who
 " does not love thee his Saviour." *Kenn.*

This, fir, is what we should aim at; this
 is the end and design of the Christian
 ministry, to inspire an ardent affection
 for the name of Jesus. For this we should
 bow our knees to the God and Father of
 our Lord Jesus Christ, that our people
 may love Him, who first loved us; that
 Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith;
 that they may be rooted and grounded in
 love, and know the love of Christ, which
 passeth knowledge. If we do not effect
 this, we do nothing: we are then the
 salt

falt which hath lost its favour. The end
of the commandment is charity, or love:

'Tis love that makes our nimble feet
In swift obedience move:
The devils know, and tremble too;
But Satan cannot love.

Wishing you to become a true *gospeller* or
gospel preacher,

I remain, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

LET-

L E T T E R X.

O N C A T E C H I S I N G .

REV. SIR,

I CANNOT put an end to our correspondence without taking notice of your animadversions on what I said in my discourse about *catechising*. You charge me with negligence and inconsistency.

The great distance I have been obliged to live from my cure, has in some degree prevented an exact discharge of this parochial duty, and of another, which I shall mention in a future letter. I say *in some degree*; for I have another obstacle to alledge in excuse for my seeming negligence.

You say, “*Some* have asserted, in the “zeal of favouritism, that there are no “children in my parish.” It is fitting that favouritism should be ready to excuse, or justify a friend; but should never invent

invent lying excuses. And, fir, you ought to have been very certain of facts, before you accused these *some* people of telling a lie in my favour. You could not understand them, as asserting, that there are absolutely *no* children in my parish; but that there are not a sufficient number of proper persons, who could be called upon for publick catechising. And this is really the truth. Since the publication of your letter, I have procured an account of the number of children in my little cure; and there are at this time no more than eight, between the age of seven and fourteen years; and four of these belong to two large families, who are lately come to sojourn in my parish. Perhaps some people will think these circumstances sufficiently acquit me of negligence.

But you choose to assist me with another excuse; because, under it, you think you can screen yourself and some of your negligent brethren. “ Parents neglect to

K

“ send

“send their children to be catechised.” Negligent clergymen may try to shift the blame from their own shoulders, and to load parents with it; but sensible people will see with what an ill grace. The fault, sir, is not in parents, a few exceptions allowed, but in the clergy. If you do no more than any old woman in the parish may do as well, that is, if you only hear children repeat the catechism by rote, parents will not be at the trouble, to clean and dress their children, to send them to you. But if you do your duty as you ought, they will then send their children, and Masters their servants, to the church to be catechised publickly, “when,” as Bishop Beveridge observed, “they find, “you do not only examine those who are “sent, whether they can say the *catechism*, “but set yourselves in good earnest to instruct them thoroughly in all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and “in all the duties which they owe to almighty God, to their sovereign, to their
“parents,

“ parents, and to all their relations, as well
 “ as to themselves and to one another. For
 “ they will then see, that this is the best
 “ sort of education that parents can give
 “ their children; and that which will do
 “ them more good, than any thing else
 “ which they can ever do for them.”

Had you rightly distinguished between
that catechising which our Church requires
 every Sunday afternoon, which I lamented,
 in my discourse, as grown out of use, and
 that other catechising, which is now used
 by many clergymen in Lent only, and
 which consists merely in hearing children
 repeat the church-catechism by rote, you
 had not charged me with inconsistency;
 for I did not so much as intimate that, in
 this superficial way, the clergy do not ca-
 techise; and instead of saying, that I am
 the only clergyman in the neighbourhood
 of Bewdley who does not catechise, you
 would have said, that the Rector of Dowles
 is the only one who does. I defined
catechising to be a familiar instruction of

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ignorant

ignorant people in the first principles of Christianity. Now, sir, though I have so few children in my parish to instruct, I have many grown people in my congregation every Sunday, who want the lowest kind of instruction. I could not catechise these in form: but I have made it my practice to discourse from the pulpit in a plain, familiar manner on the first principles of Christianity: I have explained several parts of the church-catechism: our ritual, behaviour at church, and the sacraments have frequently been my subjects: propounding questions to my audience to be answered in their own breasts. This is not called catechising; you call it (to make me appear ridiculous) extempore preaching; but is in fact, the very thing, at least comes the nearest to the *catechising*, which our Church requires.

And now, sir, what becomes of your accusation of negligence and inconsistency! You say "my candour, my modesty, and my judgment are not a little called in question."

"tion." You may still doubt my judgment, if you please, and think I have not "so much *good sense* as some people, in the zeal of "favouritism, no doubt, have given me "credit for;" but, I hope, my candour at least will be allowed. Truly I think it an evidence of candour, to mention a fault, of which I myself am not quite clear*. I received my first instructions from a mother, who was the most guileless woman I ever knew: she taught me to abhor falshood, and to speak truth whatever present inconveniences it might bring upon myself. And, sir, I would never refrain from speaking truth, the whole truth, especially from the pulpit, to avoid your censure. But at the time I preached in Bewdley Chapel, the importance of catechising affected my mind greatly, and

* It is but too possible, said Secker to his Clergy, that sometimes you must excite your people to virtues, in which you are, more or less, deficient yourselves. For it would be heinous unfaithfulness to omit or explain away necessary precepts, because you are imperfect in the practice of them.

I had formed a plan for catechising the children of my parish and neighbourhood. So that the imputation of inconsistency, and, I hope, of negligence too, comes to nothing.

After all, I must confess, that I am not quite satisfied with my own conduct. I think I might have been more diligent in my parish, had I the zeal for which you give me credit, notwithstanding the obstacles which have been mentioned; for I have never yet set my mind upon any object but I found means to overcome the difficulties, which stood in the way to the accomplishment of my design. Instead of the self importance, of which you accuse me, I feel so conscious of my defects, that in view of what I ought to be and do, I could run my head against the wall of my church; and the constant cry of my heart is *Κ'υριε ἐλέησον, χριστέ ἐλέησον.*

What I said in my discourse about *catechising*, and which gave you so much offence,

fence, was extracted from a preface, which Bishop Beveridge prefixed to his short explanation of the church-catechism. Had you known this, you would not have made such a tragical out-cry about a *formidable* attack upon the Clergy, on this subject. As the book is not in every ones hand, I will present you with some passages in that preface, hoping they will excite the clergy, who may read these letters, to set themselves in earnest to the discharge of this very necessary duty.

“ We see, to our grief and shame, that
 “ many, who do not only profess the re-
 “ ligion of Jesus Christ, among us, but
 “ have the gospel continually preached to
 “ them, are notwithstanding as bad, if
 “ not much worse, than some of those who
 “ never heard of it. Neither can it be
 “ otherwise, so long as the great duty of
 “ *catechising*, or instructing people in the
 “ first principles of the Christian religion,
 “ IS SO GENERALLY NEGLECTED, OR SLIGHTLY
 “ PERFORMED, AS IT HATH BEEN FOR MANY

“ YEARS TOGETHER. For people being
 “ baptised into Christ, in their infancy,—
 “ unless they be rightly informed, as they
 “ grow up, of what they then promised,
 “ before they have contracted any ill ha-
 “ bits, whatsoever outward profession
 “ they may make of the Christian religion,
 “ it hath little or no effect upon them.
 “ For they usually profess it, not as it is
 “ the religion of Christ, but as it is the
 “ religion of their country, in which they
 “ are born and bred. And although they
 “ have the gospel preached over and over
 “ again to them, and make it a great part
 “ of their religion to hear it, yet it makes
 “ but little impression upon them, because
 “ they do not understand the principles
 “ we go upon, nor the meaning of the
 “ terms we use, and must of necessity use,
 “ in the right preaching of it: which to
 “ me seems one of the chief reasons, why
 “ so many sermons in our days are
 “ preached to no purpose, except it be to
 “ aggravate the faults of those that hear
 “ them:

“ them: whereas if the principles of our
 “ holy religion were first instilled into
 “ those which are young, as they grow in
 “ years, they would grow in grace too,
 “ and in the knowledge of our Lord and
 “ Saviour Jesus Christ, and so by degrees
 “ would be rightly disposed and qualified
 “ both to understand, and to receive the
 “ word with all readiness of mind, and
 “ would profit more by any one sermon
 “ they hear, than others do by all, how
 “ many soever they be.

“ Upon these, among many other ac-
 “ counts, it is to be earnestly wished by
 “ all that love Christ and his religion,
 “ that the Rubricks and Canons of our
 “ Church concerning *catechising*, could be
 “ generally and duly observed. The
 “ Church of Christ would then put on an-
 “ other face, and true primitive Christi-
 “ anity would soon be revived among us.

“ Every curate or minister of every
 “ parish in England, is obliged, by the
 “ Rubrick and fifty-ninth Canon, not
 “ carc-

“ carelessly but *diligently*, not privately
 “ but *openly*, to examine and instruct some
 “ of his parish in some part of the *catechism*
 “ every Sunday and holy-day throughout
 “ the year: so that none can ever neglect
 “ or omit it upon those days, without ma-
 “ nifest and wilful disobedience to the
 “ laws both of the Church and state under
 “ which they live, and that too in a thing
 “ which they are bound to do, out of duty
 “ to God, and to the people committed
 “ to their charge, although there was no
 “ such positive law for it. But howsoever
 “ lest any should be so stupid and insensi-
 “ ble of their duty herein, as, notwith-
 “ standing all this, still to continue in the
 “ neglect of it, our Church in the foresaid
 “ Canon hath enforced it with the greatest
 “ penalty that she can inflict: For her
 “ words are these,” *And if any minister shall*
neglect his duty herein, let him be sharply re-
proved upon the first complaint, and true
notice thereof given to the Bishop or ordinary
of the place. If after submitting himself, he
shall

shall willingly offend therein again, let him be suspended. If so the third time, there being little hope that he will be therein reformed, then excommunicated, and so remain until he be reformed. Can. 59.

“ Another thing, much to be observed
 “ in these laws, is, that every minister is
 “ bound not only to teach the youth and
 “ ignorant persons of his parish their cate-
 “ *chism*, and to examine whether they can
 “ say it, but he is bound likewise to in-
 “ *struct* them in it, and to examine whether
 “ they *understand* it or no; and that too,
 “ so long, till they can all, according to
 “ their several abilities, give a good ac-
 “ count of their faith, and of all the du-
 “ ties which God requireth of them.

“ Now if all this was duly and general-
 “ ly observed all the kingdom over, what
 “ an excellent Church and people should
 “ we then become. Then the promise
 “ which God hath made to his Church in
 “ general, would be fulfilled to ours par-
 “ ticularly. For we should all know him from
 “ the

“ *the least to the greatest of us.* And if we
 “ knew him aright, we could not but
 “ serve, honour, and obey him as we
 “ ought, and so live as becometh Christi-
 “ ans, shining as lights in the world.

“ It is indeed a very hard and difficult
 “ duty, to do it effectually. It is easy
 “ enough, I confess, to hear children or
 “ others say their *catechism* by rote: but
 “ that signifies very little, unless they un-
 “ derstand what they say. But to make
 “ them understand every word and expres-
 “ sion, as it is necessary they should, in
 “ order to their being fully instructed in
 “ it; this, I think, is one of the hardest
 “ duties belonging to the ministerial office.
 “ For it requires great presence of mind,
 “ and quickness of invention, to explain
 “ every thing so, as the weakest capacities
 “ may apprehend it. But how hard so-
 “ ever it is, IT IS NECESSARY TO BE DONE.
 “ And therefore every minister should
 “ study and strive all he can to do it so,
 “ as that it may answer the end for which

“ it

“ it is appointed, and that he may give a
“ good account of it at the Last-Day.

“ For which purpose many have taken
“ great and worthy pains in sub-dividing
“ the *catechism* into lesser questions and
“ answers, to be got without-book, and
“ repeated by those who come to be ex-
“ amined and instructed in it. And that
“ doubtless is of great use, if due care be
“ taken that they do not make such an-
“ swers, as they are apt to repeat the *cate-*
“ *chism*, only by rote, without understand-
“ ing what is meant by them. But here-
“ in lies the main difficulty, even how to
“ possess young and ignorant people with
“ a clear understanding, right apprehen-
“ sions; and a due sense of all that is
“ contained in the *catechism*; that they
“ may become wise unto salvation.
“ Which every one should endeavour by
“ all such ways and means, which, he finds
“ or thinks, will conduce most towards
“ it.—

“ The course that to me seems most ef-
“ fectual

“fectual to this purpose, is, by giving
 “them first a short, plain and easy expo-
 “sition of some one part of the catechism;
 “and then examining whether they under-
 “stand what was said, by propounding such
 “questions to them as had been resolved
 “in the fore-going exposition. And
 “where we find their understanding, or
 “their memory, or both to fail them, then
 “to tell them the same thing over again,
 “in other words, such as we think most
 “easy and familiar to them. And this
 “not only at that time, but when they
 “come next to be examined again; by
 “which time their parents, or some other
 “that were present, may have helped them
 “by repeating the same things so often
 “to them, that they may be able to give
 “some tolerable account of them, con-
 “sidering each one’s capacity and age.
 “And if this course be continued so as to
 “go over the whole *catechism* in this man-
 “ner, once or twice a year to the same
 “persons, though they began young and
 “ignorant,

“ ignorant, yet I doubt not, but by the
“ blessing of God, they will at last come to
“ have a right understanding in all things
“ necessary to their salvation.

“ That this, or any other way that shall
“ be taken for the instructing children,
“ may have its due effect, they must not
“ only be taught the *catechism* while they
“ are young and repeat it publicly for
“ a while, and then leave it off again,
“ perhaps in a year or two, but they must
“ continue it for many years together.
“ And though it may be proper to pro-
“ pound to them at first only one or two
“ questions, such as the minister shall
“ think fit, under each head, yet as they
“ grow in years, and so are more capable,
“ every thing that is necessary to be known
“ in every part of the *catechism* should by
“ degrees be made plain and easy to them,
“ till they understand the whole, and are
“ able to give a good account of any
“ material question that can be propound-
“ ed to them out of it. But this cannot be
“ done

“ done in a short time. They who are
 “ designed for any art or trade are gene-
 “ rally seven years in learning the mystery
 “ of it, although they be usually sixteen or
 “ seventeen years of age before they begin.
 “ How then can children before that age
 “ be thought able to learn all the mysteries
 “ of our holy religion in less time? No;
 “ it is well if they can do it in so little:
 “ or, rather, it is scarce possible they
 “ should, unless there be more than ordi-
 “ nary care and pains taken with them.
 “ The frequent repeating of the *catechism*,
 “ may imprint the words, upon their
 “ minds : but to bring them to a right
 “ understanding and due sense of the mat-
 “ ter contained in those words, will re-
 “ quire a great deal of time, if not all they
 “ have, till they are fit to go out into the
 “ world, or at least are sixteen or seventeen
 “ years old. Neither do I see how it can
 “ be done in that time, unless the minister
 “ performs his duty as it is enjoined *every*
 “ *Lord's day*, or at least so often as to go
 “ over

" over the whole *catechism* once, if not
 " oftener, every year: for if he doth it only
 " at one time of the year, as suppose in
 " Lent, the children, having forgotten
 " what they learned the year before, must
 " always begin again, and so never come
 " to the end: whereas if these great
 " truths and duties be inculcated into
 " them every Lord's-day, and so over and
 " over again all along till they come to
 " the foresaid years, or, if there be oc-
 " casion, longer; they will in all probabi-
 " lity make such impressions upon them
 " as will stick by them as long as they live,
 " and by the grace and blessing of God,
 " keep them always stedfast in the faith,
 " and sincere in their obedience to Him.
 " And if this was once constantly prac-
 " tised in every parish, as it ought, the
 " whole nation would soon find the happy
 " effects of it. This being one of the best
 " means that can be used for the reform-
 " ing the many disorders that are in it,

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" and

“ and without which, it can never be done
“ effectually.”

I have only to add my earnest wishes, that the arguments of this pious Prelate may have their due weight with you, and with other of the Clergy, who have hitherto been contented with hearing children repeat the Catechism by rote, and may engage you, and them, to a careful instruction of youth in the knowledge of those things which advance both the temporal and eternal interests of our fellow-creatures.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

LET-

L E T T E R XI.

O N C A T E C H I S I N G .

REV. SIR,

THE importance of catechising, or instructing youth in the principles of Christianity, is so great, that I have resumed the subject, in order to lay before you the sentiments of Archbishop Secker.

“ Another defect in some places is, that
 “ barely the words of the Catechism are
 “ taught without any explanation. Now
 “ the very plainest expressions in it will
 “ need to be varied into others that are
 “ equivalent: else children will too often
 “ learn nothing but the sound, and unless
 “ this danger, which is a very great one,
 “ be guarded against, you will have spent
 “ both their pains and your own to but
 “ small purpose. Besides, all sciences have
 “ their terms, which must be interpreted
 “ to beginners: and some of those in the
 “ catechism are figurative ones; very prudently used, as they comprehend in a

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“ little

“ little compass much meaning, and lead
 “ to the understanding of the same figures
 “ in scripture; but undoubtedly used on
 “ purpose to be explained: without
 “ which they are liable to make either no
 “ impression or a wrong one. And farther
 “ still, a system so short as to be learnt by
 “ heart, must have need, were it ever so
 “ clear, to be enlarged on; the proofs of
 “ its truth, the connections and tendency
 “ of its doctrines, the use and extent of its
 “ precepts to be shewn: and therefore since
 “ the Canon with great reason enjoins, not
 “ only that you examine, but *instruct* the
 “ children in their catechism, I hope you
 “ will think this a very needful part of
 “ that instruction. As to the manner of
 “ it, that may be different, not only in
 “ different places, but in the same at dif-
 “ ferent times. Sometimes a continued
 “ discourse* of some length may be re-

* Sermons on the Baptismal Covenant, the Creed,
 and the Ten Commandments by S. Walker, of Truro,
 are excellent examples of the “ continued discourse”
 recommended by the Archbishop,

“ quisiſite

“quisite: as it will lay before the adult
 “part of your parishioners a methodical
 “summary of Christian doctrine; which
 “they often want very much for them-
 “selves, and will thus be enabled to teach
 “something of it to their children, after
 “they have heard it together from you.

“Sometimes a cursory exposition of the
 “more difficult expressions may deserve
 “the preference. But asking the children
 “questions, relating to each part, and pr-
 “curing them to learn texts of scrip-
 “ture confirming each, will be always bene-
 “ficial. The words of the catechism it-
 “self may be very usefully broken into
 “shorter questions and answers: to which
 “others may be added out of any one of
 “the many good expositions that have
 “been made public. Only you should
 “endeavour as soon and as much as you
 “can to make this a trial and improve-
 “ment of the understanding as well as the
 “memory of young people, by asking such
 “things as they should reply to in words

“ of their own ; making that easy to them
 “ in every possible way. And indeed, if
 “ many of your questions were formed to
 “ be answered merely by affirming or de-
 “ nying, it would be a very good method :
 “ and there is an exposition drawn up in
 “ that manner.

“ In some places it is pleaded, that the
 “ children cannot read, and their parents
 “ either cannot or will not get them taught,
 “ and therefore the foundation for their
 “ learning the catechism is wanting.
 “ But surely some person might be found,
 “ within a moderate distance from every
 “ place, to whom parents might be indu-
 “ ced, at least if something were contribu-
 “ ted towards it, to send their children to
 “ be instructed thus far. Or at the worst,
 “ they who cannot read might easily by
 “ degrees learn so much as the catechism
 “ by heart : especially as the three main
 “ parts of it are in every Sunday’s prayers.
 “ The incapacity of reading was almost
 “ general at the time of the Reformation :

“ yet

“ yet even in those days the Clergy were
 “ able to teach first parents and household-
 “ ers, then by their means children and
 “ servants, the Lord’s prayer, the creed,
 “ and the ten commandments: and after-
 “ wards the rest of the catechism.”

This worthy Prelate did himself practice what he recommended to the regard of his Clergy. When Bishop of Oxford, he was, I think, at the same time Rector of St. James’s, and then diligently explained the church-catechism to his parishioners, in a course of catechetical lectures. The learned Usher Archbishop of Armagh devoted an hour every Friday afternoon, in his chapel, to instruct his family and neighbours in the catechism.—But there is another example, which deserves our constant regard, and which excites us to imitation: it is that of the meek and lowly Jesus; who said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and whose wonderful condescension and patience stooped to the infirmities of his

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ignorant and foolish, his dull and prejudiced disciples, who in understanding were little children, and perverse ones too.

While I have been writing this and the former letter, a passage in Isaiah has frequently occurred to my memory: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." To instruct children in this manner, you will find a more difficult and laborious task, than "composing well" and writing a set of "good sermons" to be preached over and over again. The first Bishops of Rome were sure, sooner or later, to pay the forfeiture of their lives by a violent death: and, it hath been said, no man would ever sit in the episcopal chair, who did not love Christ more than his own life:

life: and I am persuaded, no Clergyman will ever be a diligent catechist, who does not love our Saviour, and seek the salvation of people's souls more than his own ease, and the indulgence of an indolent temper, or who desires any thing more for himself in this world than that without which he cannot keep God's laws.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

LET-

L E T T E R X I I .

O N C O N F I R M A T I O N .

R E V . S I R ,

I HAVE before insisted, in general, on the importance of the great duty of catechising; but there is one argument for it yet behind. Children are quite passive in baptism: and it is necessary, when they come to age, that they become Christians on principle. In order to this, they must be made acquainted with the nature of the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with their own condition, as needing that salvation: otherwise, they can never become Christians by an act of their own will.

Reason and scripture shew this to be absolutely necessary: our Church esteems it necessary. The catechist puts it to every ones conscience; “ Dost thou think
 “ that thou art bound to believe, and to
 “ do

“do as they (thy Godfathers and Godmothers) promised for thee?” We are told, that Repentance, whereby we forsake sin; and faith, whereby we stedfastly believe the promises of God, must be performed by every one, when he comes to age: and, at confirmation, every one professes to be a Christian on principle by an act of his own will.

It is only on supposition of previous instruction, and on conviction of the reality of people's conversion to our God and Saviour, that any are to be confirmed. If a Bishop be not satisfied, that candidates for confirmation are well grounded in the principles of Christianity, he ought not to confirm them: otherwise the people are confirmed in their ignorance; and the Bishop propagates in the Church the gross darkness which covers the earth. It is to be feared that this is now generally the case. Multitudes are dragged together from various parts of the country to be *bishopp'd*, as they call it, regarding confirmation

tion as an idle ceremony, or as a charm: the assembly looks more like a riotous meeting, than a religious congregation of devout people: children are confirmed before they have any knowledge of themselves, or of the principles of Christianity; and not one in fifty becomes a communicant after confirmation; which demonstrates the wretched state in which they received imposition of hands.

We ought either to lay aside the baptism of infants entirely; or be more careful of our catechumens, after the example of the primitive Church; and not admit any into the number of the faithful, by confirmation, of whose real conversion to God, we have not good reasons to be persuaded. If this were done, there would soon be an end to the idle controversy about pedit and adult-baptism.

Supposing a minister has done his duty in instructing youth in the principles of Christianity, and that he does not present any to the Bishop to be confirmed, but
such

such as he verily believes are worthy to be admitted into the number of the faithful in Christ Jesus, infant baptism and the ancient rite of confirmation will then appear reasonable, and be very useful. Think with yourself, sir, that you see a minister, with a little flock of enlightened and sanctified Christians, going to his superiour in the Church, to give an account of his stewardship. “ Behold, I and the
 “ children whom the Lord hath given
 “ me, are for signs, and for wonders in
 “ Israel: these are the seals of my ministry,
 “ my evidences that I have not preached
 “ in vain, neither laboured in vain.”—
 Think with yourself, what pleasure a spiritual father in Christ must feel on such a joyful occasion! With what gratitude to God! with what affectionate regard to their pastor! with what holy reverence and sweet expectation, the candidates approach, to receive full admission into the communion of saints! while they profess,
 “ We heartily thank our heavenly Fa-
 “ ther

“ ther, that he hath called us to this state
 “ of falvation—a falvation which we cor-
 “ dially approve and sincerely value in
 “ the whole of it, as most worthy of and
 “ honourable to God and to Jesus Christ
 “ our Saviour—a falvation, without
 “ which, we are no better than ruined crea-
 “ tures, eternally undone; but which is
 “ complete in its effects to us. We avouch
 “ this day the Lord to be our God: we
 “ will never be ashamed to confess the
 “ faith of Christ crucified; and are deter-
 “ mined to fight manfully under his ban-
 “ ner against sin, the world, and Satan;
 “ and, through grace divine, will conti-
 “ nue his faithful soldiers and servants
 “ to our life’s end.” With what high
 satisfaction will a Christian bishop lay his
 hands on one whom he has good reason to
 believe is a member of Christ, a child of
 God, an heir of immortal glory! Me-
 thinks, I see him engaged in his most de-
 lightful employ, and that to which every
 other office of a bishop and minister is only
 sub-

subservient. To admit them into the fellowship of saints and angels, the keys of the kingdom of heaven unlock the everlasting doors of mercy: they are invited by the bishop into the joy of their Lord, in words to this effect:

“ Come hither ye, whom from an evil world
 “ The name of Jesus draws ! you count him sweet,
 “ And great, and mighty, by that glimm’ring light
 “ Your novice minds have gain’d. You venerate
 “ That full acquaintance, and that vital union
 “ Whereby the faithful know him : and to this
 “ You now aspire. But can you then let go
 “ Your worldly wisdom, and become as babes
 “ To learn new maxims and the mind of Christ
 “ Can you forsake your former ease and sunshine
 “ T’ associate with a poor afflicted people,
 “ The scorn of all mankind ? Can you the weight
 “ Of your whole souls, with all your hopes of God,
 “ Rest on a long-past action ; and that such
 “ As your Lord’s mystic but opprobrious death ;
 “ Or on events which visionary seem,
 “ A resurrection, and some second world ?
 “ Can you such gratitude and sov’rain love
 “ Contract for One, who, but with grace unseen,
 “ Assists you inwardly ; that for his sake
 “ You’ll crucify your flesh, curb your own will,

“ And

“ And nothing but his servants be in life ?

“ Dare you henceforward undertake these things ?

“ ——— Then you shall soon, by sacred rites,

“ Among us be admitted.” *Gambrell*

Besides the plea of antiquity, which may be pleaded for the rite of confirmation; thus administered, it is so reasonable, so useful, and necessary a service, that I cannot see how it can be objected to. Calvin himself approved of confirmation properly administered. Our dissenting brethren do not use it; but they use what is equivalent to it; for, before that any one is admitted into their church-fellowship, he must give an account of his views of the principles of Christianity, and of his experience, to the assembled members of the Church into which he sues for admittance.

Wishing that every thing in our own Church may be done decently and in order,

I remain, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

L E T.

L E T T E R XIII.

ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

REV. SIR,

THE common people entertain very superstitious notions of the sacrament of baptism. They are shocked at the idea of a child dying unbaptized: they fancy, if it goes out of the world *without a name*, it will be a wandering ghost, like the *manes* of the ancient heathens, whose bodies were denied sepulture. Yet, where this superstition prevails in any degree, I could never discover any reverence for baptism, as a Christian sacrament. And, I am sorry to say, the Clergy, some of the Clergy, shew very little more respect, in the administration of this ordinance, than the common people. In the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we discover some degree of awe and reverence; but, in baptism, none. Yet it is as much, and equally as important an ordinance,

M

dinance, or sacrament of Christ's institution, as that of the Lord's supper.

Next to the want of proper instruction, and especially neglect of the great duty of catechising, the irreverent administration of baptism has been greatly owing to baptizing infants in private houses, when perhaps a nurse only is present, and it is next to impossible to support a degree of solemnity. I have seldom seen the father of the child present on these occasions; or, if he happens to be in the house, he rarely attends to what is doing, or bends his knee while the minister is praying for his child. It is much to be wished that the Rubricks were enforced, which ordain that "The
 " curates of every parish shall warn the
 " people that without great cause and necessity they procure not their children
 " to be baptized at home in their houses.
 " The people are to be admonished, that
 " it is most convenient, that baptism
 " should not be administered but upon
 " Sundays, and other holy-days, when
 " the

“ the most number of people come toge-
 “ ther: as well for that the congregation
 “ there present may testify the receiving
 “ of them that be newly baptized, into the
 “ number of Christ’s church; as also be-
 “ cause in the baptism of infants, every
 “ man present may be put in remembrance
 “ of his own profession made to God in his
 “ baptism.”

Another cause of the irreverent admini-
 stration of baptism is deferring the ordi-
 nance, or the recognition of it, when chil-
 dren are presented by Godfathers and
 Godmothers in the church, beyond the
 time limited by the Rubrick. “ The
 “ curates of every parish shall often admo-
 “ nish the people that they defer not the
 “ baptism of their children longer than
 “ the first or second Sunday next after their
 “ birth, unless upon a great and reason-
 “ able cause, to be approved by the curate.”

The only reason in general, why baptism
 is deferred a longer time, is, to prepare for
 an indecent carousal on the occasion;

M 2

when,

when, if we were to judge of baptism by the behaviour of those present, we might rather think the child baptized into Bacchus, than into Christ.

A child may be brought into the congregation with more safety a week after its birth, as it can be conveniently wrapped up in warm cloathing, and be kept covered easily, than when three months, or half a year old.

In the large parish, where I served many years, before I came into Worcestershire, it was usual to defer the baptism of infants till after the ensuing harvest. Drunkenness, gluttony, gaming, and indecent riot were generally the consequences; and the poor labourers suffered greatly from the expence of these feasts. After admonishing my parishioners of the impropriety of their conduct, I urged them to present their children to be baptized as the Rubrick directs, and insisted that if they would not bring their children to church to be christened in the month,

or

or at the month's end, when the mother came to be churched, I would not church the mother. Perhaps I strained my authority a little in this ; but the effect was what I wished. I set them the example in baptizing my own children publicly the first or second Sunday after birth ; and had the pleasure of seeing several of my parishioners follow the example ; and in a little while, every child in the parish was baptized or christened at the month's end, and we heard no more of expensive and indecent christenings. These circumstances are mentioned to shew what may be done ; for many clergymen submit to what they disapprove, in despair of any good effects from proper exertions.

Our church requires that none but communicants, that is, in the language of the primitive church, none but the faithful, shall be admitted to stand as sponsors, or as Godfathers and Godmothers, at the christening or confirming of any one. As this rule cannot be observed

without excluding half our parishioners from baptism, which would occasion great uneasiness, we certainly ought to conform to the rule as nearly as circumstances of things, in the present degenerate state of the church, will admit. We ought to take care that sponsors be previously taught to behave with outward propriety at the administration of this sacrament, and that not one person be admitted to stand, who, on account of notorious ignorance, or profaneness, is evidently unqualified for the office. The contrary practice is another cause of that irreverence, which manifestly attends the administration of this sacrament.

It would be far better to have no Godfathers, or Godmothers, than such as are a publick disgrace to the Christian name. That which our Church requires, by demanding Godfathers and Godmothers, is *security* for the Christian education of children, that is, that they be taught whatever a Christian ought to know and believe

believe to his soul's health: but ignorant and profane Godfathers and Godmothers are no security at all. It would be as reasonable a practice, if the missionaries, who are sent out by the society for propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, were to baptize the children of heathen parents and bribe the heathens themselves to stand as sponsors for those children, as it is to baptize children of profane Christians, so called, and admit heathenish Christians to stand as sponsors for the Christian education of our children here at home.

To shew you that I am not quite singular in these sentiments, I will transcribe a passage from one of Archbishop Secker's charges. " Baptism, especially when
 " administered in private houses with-
 " out necessity, is too often treated, even
 " during the administration, rather as an
 " idle ceremony than a Christian sacra-
 " ment: or however that be, is com-
 " monly close followed by very unsuitable,

“ if not otherwise also indecent levity and
 “ jollity. Now in these circumstances it
 “ is highly requisite, that the minister
 “ should by a due mixture of gravity and
 “ judgment support the solemnity of the
 “ ordinance; and either prevent impro-
 “ prieties in the sequel, or if it be doubt-
 “ ful whether he can, excuse himself, with
 “ a civil intimation of the unsuitness of
 “ them, from being present.”

If he that profanes the Lords supper,
 who eateth and drinketh unworthily, is
 guilty of the body and blood of Christ,
 and eateth and drinketh to his own dam-
 nation, surely, sir, where there are such
 practices as these which I complain of in
 this letter, when this holy sacrament of
 baptism is profaned, the blessing of Hea-
 ven is not to be expected. I shall conclude
 this letter with a sentence from the Au-
 thor above quoted, and which I wish to
 be particularly noticed by you and all
 the Clergy; “ If we only just do what
 “ we

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“ we can be punished by our superiors
“ for neglecting, we must neither expect
“ success nor reward.”

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

LET-

L E T T E R XII.

ON COMMUNION, OR RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

R E V. S I R,

THE multitudes of sects, into which Christendom is divided and subdivided, is not a greater sign of the corruption of Christianity, than is the smallness of the number of communicants in our Church of its degeneracy.

That scripture is fulfilled in us ; “ Men
“ shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,
“ disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent,
“ fierce, despisers of those that are good,
“ traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the
“ power

“ power thereof.” Who croud our jails? who are hanged at the gallows by dozens for capital offences; for crimes*, which the primitive Christians thought impossible to be committed by any who have been baptised? for the most part, members of the Church of England. Who fill the stews? Whom do we hear profanely curse and swear, whenever we walk the streets? Who defile our land by suicide, murder, theft, and rapine? by blasphemy, drunken-

* “ Among all this number of criminals, and this variety of inditements, what Christian do you find arraigned for assassinating, or for a pickpocket, or for sacrilege, or for pilfering at the bath? Do you hear at the trials any article against Christians, like that which other malefactors are charged withal? Does not the prison sweat with your heathen criminals continually? Do not the mines continually groan with the load of heathens? Are not your wild beasts fattened with heathens? And is not the whole herd of condemned wretches all of your religion? Now among all these malefactors, there’s not a Christian to be found for any crime, but that of his name only, or if there be, we disown him for a Christian.” Tertullian.

ness,

ness, whoredoms, adulteries, and unnatural crimes? for the most part, members of the Church of England. But all these crimes together, daily and hourly committed by thousands and tens of thousands, do not mark our lamentable state more strongly, than does the contempt of Christ's ordinance which, on all the great festivals, is expressed by millions in our land.

The clergy have for a long while been endeavouring to persuade people to come to the sacrament of Christ's body and blood; first, by insisting upon it, that it is their *duty*; secondly, by explaining away, or softening the meaning of that text, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." But it is evident how little they have prevailed by all their arguments; for three parts, at least, out of four of all the men and women in this kingdom constantly turn their backs upon the Lord's table.

To

To prove it the duty of their parishioners to receive the holy sacrament, the Clergy urge the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me." But they should consider, that this command does not oblige merely nominal Christians. "The wicked, and such as are void of a lively faith" ought not to approach this holy table; and instead of inviting them to it, we should insist that they keep away, by a serious and solemn declaration that "receiving the holy communion doth nothing else but increase their damnation."

Would it not be much better to represent the receiving this sacrament as a *privilege*, rather than a duty; a privilege which belongs only to the faithful in Christ; and the greatest privilege which can be enjoyed on this side of eternity? "When with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive this holy sacrament, then the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken; then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and
 " drink

“ drink his blood; then we dwell in
 “ Christ, and Christ in us; we are one
 “ with Christ, and Christ with us: So is
 “ the danger great, if we receive the same
 “ unworthily. For then we are guilty of
 “ the body and blood of Christ our Savi-
 “ our; we eat and drink our own damna-
 “ tion, not considering the Lord’s
 “ body.”

But we are told that damnation signi-
 fies condemnation: a distinction without
 a difference. Woe be to us, whatever the
 word imports, if “ we kindle God’s wrath
 “ against us.” If God condemn, who
 shall justify? And do we not eat and drink
 unworthily, when we go to the sacrament
 merely as a *duty*, to establish our own righ-
 teousness? Is not this to be antichrists;
 to oppose him by his own ordinance? If
 this or any other duty, can make us righ-
 teous in the sight of God, or be a propi-
 tiation for our sins, then Christ died in
 vain.

To be unworthy of enjoying the bene-
 fit

fit of the means of grace is one thing: to eat and drink *unworthily* is quite another. —Unworthy we all are of the least of all God's mercies; unworthy so much as to gather up the crumbs which fall from our Master's table; and we can never make ourselves worthy of any favour from God by any means. But eating and drinking unworthily consists in not regarding the sacrament agreeably to the purpose for which it was instituted: and surely they do not so regard it, who are void of a true and lively faith in Christ as the one only Mediator; as the only propitiation for sin; as the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. If people do not understand the true nature and design of this ordinance, as preaching Christ unto us, and as the means of enjoying Christ in the exercise of faith upon him; or, if the eyes of their understandings be not enlightened to discern the Lord's body in the ordinance; they must
of

of necessity entertain superstitious notions of it, either as containing some hidden charm, or as a duty, by the discharge of which, the mere opus operatum, they are to expiate their guilt and make themselves righteous.

I am sensible that the Clergy persuade people to come to the sacrament on supposition of their being Christians. But they ought to have some better grounds for this supposition than an excessive straining of charity: and surely charity ought never to make suppositions against the strongest evidences to the contrary. It is a fault attended with mischievous consequences, to take it for granted that all our people are real Christians, to preach to them as such, supposing that they have faith, and only want to amend their manners. They who are sunk in ignorance of the great truths of Christianity; they who are living unworthy of the Christian name, should be told that they are not Christians; we must appeal to their fruits,

to prove to them that the tree is not yet made good by sanctifying faith. " I intend to treat you to consider very seriously, said Secker to his Clergy, what numbers there are in most parishes, and therefore perhaps in yours, whom you cannot think to be in a state of salvation; and how greatly it imports you to use with them, as you solemnly promised at your ordination, not only public, but private monitions, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given. The eternal welfare of many poor creatures may depend on this: and your own is deeply concerned in it, as God himself hath declared: who will certainly expect, that what he requires you to do, be done to the very utmost of your ability. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand."

N

Instead

Instead therefore of pressing all in general to come to the sacrament, we ought to distinguish between merely nominal and real Christians, between unbelievers and believers; for all men have not faith, whatever they may pretend. “ Expounde
 “ the law truly, and open the vayle of
 “ Moses to condemn all flesh, and prove
 “ all men sinners, and all deedes under
 “ the law, before mercy have taken away
 “ the condemnation thereof, to be sinne
 “ and damnable. And then as a sayth-
 “ full Minister, set abroch the mercy of our
 “ Lord Jesus, and let the wounded consci-
 “ ences drinke of the water of him. And
 “ then shall your preachyng be with power,
 “ and not as the doctrine of the hypo-
 “ crites: and the spirite of God shall
 “ worke with you, and all consciences
 “ shall beare recorde unto you, and feele
 “ that it is so. And all doctrine that
 “ casteth a myste on these two, to sha-
 “ dow and hyde them, I mean the law of
 “ God

“ God and mercy of Christ, that resist you
 “ with all your power*.”

This faithful dealing with our people will awaken them to a real concern about the salvation of their souls: they will fly from the wrath to come, and pay a proper regard to our Saviour, and to his ordinances too. And, I can truly say, that, in more than twenty years experience, I have never known a single instance of one person, who was in earnest to be saved by Christ, that wanted pressing to come to this sacrament: but many want pressing to come to Christ; and we must press them to this, or we do nothing. The Apostles did so: “ We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” God on his part is reconciled already by the sacrifice of the cross; “ for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;

* W. Tyndall, who translated the Bible in the reign of Henry VIII.

"that we might be made the righteous-
 "ness of God in him." And is not this
 far better, than representing Chris-
 tianity as a gloomy religion, as if God
 were an hard Master and merely reconcil-
 able by *duties* extorted from us against our
 will? And is it not more desirable to see
 people pressing to the sacrament, on the
 slightest invitation, which will generally
 be the case, where the word of God is
 truly preached, than to see a score or two
 of ignorant, formal professors of Chris-
 tianity, with unconverted hearts, unsanc-
 tified tempers and lives, urged to this du-
 ty, with *A Week's Preparation* in their
 hands, which they have scanned over to
 make themselves *worthy*? Proper prepa-
 ration consists essentially in poorness of
 spirit, or in humility, that is, in a sense
 of infinite obligation to our Saviour for
 redeeming love and mercy; and this will
 not only qualify for and excite to fre-
 quent communion, but dispose us also
 "to lead a new life, following the com-
 "mandments

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“mandments of God, and walking from
“henceforth in his holy ways.”

“I have no pleasure, sir, in writing
“some things which the cause of religion
“now obliges me to write.” I run the
risk of offending you; and fear I shall
offend others; but I am in hope of doing
more good, by declaring my sentiments
than by concealing them; and pray you
to believe that I am, SIR,

With great sincerity,

Your friend, as well as humble servant,

W. J.

N 3

LET-

L E T T E R X V.

ON PAROCHIAL VISITATION.

R E V. S I R,

IN a former letter, I promised to mention a parochial duty, which, on account of the great distance that I have been obliged to live from my cure, I have not discharged so exactly as I should.

Very few of the Clergy seem to have any idea of the necessity and importance of *parochial visitation*, that is, of going from *house to house*, to enquire particularly into the state of their people's souls, to teach and press upon their consciences truths, which have been delivered from the pulpit in a more general way. " This is, if
 " not the most useful part of a minister's
 " work, at least absolutely necessary to
 " the success of his preaching. It is also
 " by far the most laborious part, from
 " which slothful men are most apt to ex-
 " cuse

“cuse themselves. A man may gratify
 “his vanity by preaching, and public per-
 “formances; or, the neglect being visible,
 “he may be compelled to regularity by
 “fear of reproach or prosecution. But
 “diligence in private, can scarcely arise
 “from any thing but a sense of duty, and
 “of the presence of God*.”

It is a shame for an officer in the army, to be ignorant of the name and character of every soldier in his troop or company. Shepherds on the Wiltshire downs can distinguish the face and voice of every sheep in their flocks, and know the state of the carcases as well as of the fleece. Chrysostom, in his book *de sacerdotio* supposes that every bishop or pastor knows, or should know every circumstance belonging to every individual in his charge, his temporal as well as spiritual concerns.— Ignatius said, Let nothing be done without the bishop. St. Paul told the Church of Ephesus, I have kept back nothing that

* Wither Spoon.

was profitable unto you, but have taught you publicly and from *house to house*. And this he did in a very earnest and pathetic manner, in season and out of season, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, in a deep sense of his own insufficiency. "For the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears." The like care he expressed for the Thessalonians, and, no doubt, for all the Churches: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe; and you know, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children; and even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

Our sermons will be random-shots, if we do not know the hearts of our people,
and

and how to aim directly at the conscience. That citadel will hold out against irregular charges made by general declamation. Indeed, as face answereth to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man: but an almost endless variety consists with this uniformity of character; so that, a sermon which shall very well suit one person, or one set of people, may be like speaking in an unknown tongue to another, and quite foreign to their circumstances. We must therefore get acquainted with the particular views, ideas, mistakes, prejudices, weaknesses, failings, errors, faults, incongruities, and sins of our people; their tempers and practices, their hopes and their fears, their trials and temptations. And this cannot be effected, without a frequent and familiar intercourse with them. We must go to their houses, if we would get into their hearts.

The lowest classes of people make up the far greater part of every congregation: and these must have our particular and
greatest

greatest care. If peradventure a man of polite breeding, or a scholar be ordained to the ministry, he must condescend to men of low estate; he must converse frequently with his poor parishioners, if for no other reason, yet for this, to learn their mode of conception and their manner of speaking; for a scholar will ever find it more difficult to speak intelligibly to these, than to people who move in the higher walks of life.

If a parish-priest visits only the rich, to spend his time in idle chit-chat, to amuse himself, to partake of their entertainments and diversions, the rich, if they be sensible men, will despise him; and the poor will think him proud. And let us not fear that we shall demean ourselves too much, and sully the dignity of our character by condescensions: let us remember the grace of our Lord Jesus, who, though he was rich, yet, for our sakes became poor, took on him the form of a servant, preached the gospel to the poor, and washed his
disciples

disciples feet. A king, who is a father to his people; a bishop, who is a father to his clergy; a parish-priest, who is a father to his parishioners, tender of them, watching over them, diligently promoting their welfare, condescending to them, and regarding their lowest interests—these are characters, sir, which can never want respect; they are the most amiable and most God-like characters in the world.

It is impossible that we should ever acquire so much useful knowledge, by sitting in our studies to read books, as we may by watching over our own hearts, and by going into the world to study mankind. And if a Clergyman be at a loss for subject-matter for his sermons, let him go among his people; let him visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; let him attend the sick and dying beds of his parishioners; let him engage their confidence by regarding their temporal interests, and by sympathizing with them in their worldly cares and griefs: they will

will then open their hearts to him on the most important concerns, and teach him how to teach them.

Many of our parishioners live insensible of their state, unmindful of their own mortality, careless about another world, and wholly attached to earthly things.—When sickness, or misfortune, overtakes them, their first and only care is, how to get rid of the present distress. In sickness, busy hope prompts them to expect recovery, and plans for future action fill up their minds. If the disease increase, attended with alarming symptoms, the flattering hope of life, forsakes them not. Relations, standing by, plainly perceive the near approach of death, wonder at their insensibility, and fear to intimate the danger. Some one, at length, less hardened than the rest, proposes the sacrament to the dying man. “I hope, “I am not yet so bad,” is frequently the answer. Either he rejects the friendly counsel, in fullen mood, as what he

he cares not for, or needs not yet; or, if apprehensive of danger, hastily sends for a Clergyman whose offices he has wholly disregarded, all his former days, or but carelessly attended to. The priest repeats his *Pater noster*, administers the sacrament as a *viaticum*, and the miserable lamp of life goes out in utter darkness. Ah, me! how dismal are the prospects of such dying men! What shall we do? Shall we speak home to the conscience! We are not sent for, to this end: it would be a most unwelcome service: we should be accused of savage cruelty. If we refuse the sacrament, offence is taken; for surviving relations wish their friends to die in form; and hope, however groundless, to be supported by decent formalities. We cannot shun these affecting scenes: solemn engagements at our ordination forbid us to refuse attendance on the sick: and we ought not to refuse, however disagreeable to us; for good may yet be done: it is not impossible. Who can tell
what

what grace shall now attend a last attempt to save? The mighty God is our helper: his spirit can pour a flood of day into the darkest mind, in a moment, through a word in season spoken: his grace can soften most obdurate hearts. O then, let us try to save a soul alive. If the patient be too weak for converse, address surrounding friends, the wife, the husband, or the nurse with solemn warning: bid them all prepare, to seek their peace with God, before the day of grace and life shall end; reveal the almighty Saviour, and excite them to fly in earnest to that blessed hope; assure them that a penitent sinner, whenever he comes to him, will in no wise be cast out. In some such way as this, you may faithfully discharge your duty, perhaps without offence; lay a foundation for hope, even in the chamber of death; and be pure from the blood of all men.

There is a method to prevent much of the distress, which I have attempted to describe

describe. Visit your parishioners while they are in health: talk seriously with them then: speak home to their consciences then: or, if by any means this hath not been done, be the first to visit your parishioners in all their distresses; go to them in the beginning of their sicknesses. Then is your time to shew them, what man must be and do, if he would be saved: throw light into their consciences, and discover to them what they are.

I never obey a summons, I must confess, so reluctantly, as when I am called to visit the sick. My soul on these occasions is full of anxieties. To disturb a man in his last moments must appear cruel; and would hurt my own feelings, perhaps more than his: but to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace, is the excess of cruelty. Merely to go through the stated form of Visitation of the sick, would not satisfy my conscience; for, though that form is well adapted to the general states
of

of Christians, yet, is not by any means suitable to the case of ignorant and careless professors of Christianity. And were we to administer the sacrament to them, the nature and design of which they do not understand, we should only encourage a false peace, and dismiss them from the world confirmed in impenitency.

Well did the bishop charge us at our ordination, "See that you never cease
 " your labour, your care, and diligence,
 " until you have done all that lieth in
 " you"—and *all* will be little enough. Some we are to save by fear, pulling them out of the fire; others, we must win, and then nourish them, as a mother her child: we must warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient towards all men. Who is sufficient for these things! What wisdom; what prudence; what zeal; what tenderness; what charity; and what firmness, patience and resolution, are necessary!—I am too much affected with a sense of the
 importance

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importance and great difficulty of our
office to add more than, the usual conclu-
sion,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

O

LET-

L E T T E R XVI.

O N L E A R N I N G.

R E V. S I R,

WH O E V E R reads the second paragraph of your letter, and is not acquainted with the real character of the Rector of Dowles, must suppose that he is one of those mad enthusiasts, who pretend to extraordinary inspirations, to supernatural dreams, visions, and revelations communicated to them immediately from heaven. I would ask you, sir, Did you ever hear me pretend to any inspiration of any kind whatever? No—Then where is your ground for insinuating that “Extraordinary inspiration is more pretended to than learning?” And, would you insinuate that I despise learning? You know the contrary: you know the uncommon attention I pay to the education of my own children: and, you should have considered

sidered that the subject of that very discourse on which you were animadverting is THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION. The discourse indeed is a very simple one: but, if it does not shew my own learning, it plainly declares that I am a lover, and an encourager of it in others.

I think learning so essential and necessary to the welfare of mankind, that, without it, men are no better than brute beasts; and that the vast disproportion in the various ranks of people in our own nation is "owing chiefly to different degrees of education*."

There are various kinds of learning; all of which are not equally necessary to certain professions. You may be deeply learned in politics, without understanding music, either as a science, or an art. You may be a good lawyer, without knowing how to make a shoe, or to compose a medicine *secundum artem*. Another may be an excellent master of Westminster-school, who

* Charity Sermon.

is not qualified to be the Rector of a parish, or an Archbishop. And a man may be a successful preacher of the gospel, who does not understand Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. Perhaps, the Church of Christ has not sustained a greater injury from any quarter, than from the presumption of Emperors and Kings, who have taken upon them to exalt to the episcopal and pastoral offices learned men merely because they were learned, that is, had the learning which qualified them to shine as grammarians, rhetoricians, poets, historians, philosophers, and statesmen. It seems more absurd to make a man a bishop, because he possesses a large stock of classical erudition,* and is an accurate historian, and a learned philosopher or lawyer, than it would be to make any one commander in chief of an army, because he is a good chess player. St. Paul

* It is of the gospel that you are ministers: all other learning will leave you essentially unqualified.

Secker.

speaks

speaks of his “ knowledge in the mystery
 “ of Christ:” and it was this knowledge,
 together with suitable tempers, which
 qualified him to be an eminent Apostle;
 and not that learning which he acquired
 at the feet of Gamaliel.

If we take large pains to gain an accurate knowledge of the original languages, in which the holy scriptures were written, our pains will, in many ways, be abundantly rewarded: but, when it is considered, that the various readings collected by Mills and Kennicott, cannot be disposed, so as to alter the text, to countenance a new doctrine, or to deface any truth which may be clearly proved by our English translation, I am persuaded that a mere Englishman may be a good divine; and that there is no ground for that fond conceit, that, since our late improvements in philosophy, we understand the way of salvation, in any degree, better than did our venerable reformers; many of whom too understood

the original languages, the greek at least, as well as any moderns do. The Apostles did not quote the Hebrew text, but were contented to use the Septuagint version, even where the translation was far from being accurate.

I beg you will not misunderstand me: I would not have classical and philosophical, critical and historical learning neglected in the schools of the prophets, There are many advantages to be derived from a cultivation of this kind of learning. Some will make great proficiency in it, and excel. These will defend the out-works of Christianity against the attacks of learned infidels, those mighty giants, who hurl defiance against the vault of heaven; and will wrest the sacred text out of the hands of heretics. But the business of the Clergy in general is, not to deal with these, but, with men of a different character; and, therefore, that kind of learning, which is proper to contend
with

with infidels and heretics, is not necessary to a successful discharge of our duty.

If, travelling over the mountains in Wales, and amidst a multitude of tracks uncertain which road to take, you were to ask your way of a countryman passing by, he would probably exclaim in his vernacular language, I cannot speak the Saxon tongue; and would trudge on unmindful of your disappointment.——But, if the Welchman were able to speak our language ever so perfectly, yet, if he knew not the way himself, he could not inform you. He might know some of the other tracks, and tell you well enough which is *not* the way; but could not plainly declare which is the right: as the old philosophers* could oppose error and define

* Ita Philosophi, quod summum fuit humanæ scientiæ, affecuti sunt, ut intelligerent, quid non sit: illud assequi nequiverunt, ut dicerent, quid sit. Nota Ciceronis vox est: Utinam tam facile vera invenire possem, quam falsa convincere. Quod quia vires humanæ conditionis excedit: ejus officii facultas nobis est attributa, quibus tradidit Deus scientiam veritatis. Lactantius.

what truth is *not* ; but could neither define nor once think wherein that truth, which concerns the supreme happiness of man, consisteth. If we are to speak to Englishmen, it is sufficient, if we can speak plain English, and deliver the truths of the gospel in such a dialect of our mother-tongue, as will not be particularly disgusting to our audiences. But we must know those truths : we must be well acquainted with the way of salvation : we ourselves must walk in it ; or we cannot shew it to others.

Archbishop Secker supposed that one reason, why the Clergy have dwelt too little on the peculiar doctrines of the gospel in their sermons, may have been, “ for want of *inwardly* experiencing their importance : ” I suppose, he meant, for want of attending to those doctrines, and feeling a disposition and affections suitable to them excited in our hearts. The doctrines referred to are, “ The original corruption of our nature ; our redemption,
“ accord-

“ according to God’s eternal purpose in
 “ Christ, by the sacrifice of the cross ; our
 “ sanctification by the influences of the
 “ Divine Spirit ; the insufficiency of our
 “ own good works, and the efficacy of faith
 “ to salvation.” Now, it is easily seen,
 what sort of disposition, and what af-
 fections these doctrines tend to excite ; and
 will excite in any man, who really believes
 and regards them. He will certainly be
 greatly humbled under a sense of his own
 moral depravity ; he will condemn him-
 self as guilty before God ; he will fear the
 wrath of Heaven ; he will dread a future
 judgment, and tremble in the apprehen-
 sion that hell is his deserved portion ; he
 will seek reconciliation with God, but de-
 spair of attaining it by his own works ;
 he will not trust in any thing he does, but
 lean, if peradventure he can lean, only on
 the hope of heavenly grace ; the gospel
 will be to him as tidings of a reprieve and
 of a full pardon to a condemned malefac-
 tor ; he will look for salvation through
 the

the redemption which is in Christ; and depend on the influences of the Divine Spirit, and not on his own resolutions and strength, to enable him to serve God acceptably, and to fit him for eternal life: peace will come into his conscience; joy and love into his heart; and zeal for the glory of God, and to bring many to taste of the salvation in which he himself rejoices, will animate him to works of righteousness and labours of love: in short, he will feel a sense of infinite obligation to his God and Saviour, and will live in a sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. This, sir, is, what the scripture calls, "having the mind of Christ," being "crucified with Christ," having "Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith," and being "delivered into the very mould "of the gospel," and is, no doubt, what Archbishop Secker intended by "inwardly experiencing" the important truths, which he had before mentioned.

It signifies just nothing, where, or how
a man

a man has learned the truth as it is in Jesus; whether by reading the Hebrew bible or Greek testament, by a sermon preached in French or English from any ancient or modern translation of the Holy Scriptures, or by traditional revelation, as those Christians were taught, whom Chillingworth mentioned, who had never seen or heard of such a book as the Bible. It is however absolutely necessary that he should have a heart-felt acquaintance with these grand peculiarities of the gospel; or, he can never preach them to other people; he will either "explain them away," (these are Secker's words) "be industriously careful (said Dr. Hodges) to obscure, by spreading a false gloss over, these doctrinal principal points, which are entitled to a priority of order and dignity; he will be silent upon them," and preach mere moral essays; or, if he speak of them with any degree of approbation, it will be in an awkward manner merely to save appearances: his discourses will
be

be frigid, cold lectures; he will not speak as one having authority; his doctrine will not be influential; it does not come from the heart, and will not reach the heart; it will be "in word only, and not in power, in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance."

If a minister know not the plague of his own heart, how can he reveal that mystery of iniquity to others? If he be not sensible that he deserves condemnation, how will he vindicate the awful majesty, authority, and holiness of the divine law, so as to convince of sin and bring in the whole world guilty before God? If Christ be not revealed in him and he know not the true character of Jesus, what confusion must there be in his ideas and language, when he attempts to preach either law or gospel! How will he be able to resolve doubting souls, to comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak Christian, who himself has never feared or doubted? How be able to pour
the

the oil of divine consolation into afflicted consciences, to bind up the broken hearted, who has never experienced the divine consolations in his own soul? How call the faithful in Christ to set their affections on things above, who is himself earthly and sensual? How animate Christians to a life of self-denial and holiness, who is himself uncircumcised in heart and spirit? The learning, which is essentially necessary to qualify ministers for their office, is gotten by experience in the school of adversity, under sore trials and temptations, in great searchings of heart, in distresses of conscience and subsequent deliverances. “ Approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much
 “ patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in
 “ distresses—God comforteth us in all our
 “ tribulation, that we may be able to
 “ comfort them which are in any trouble
 “ by the comfort wherewith we ourselves
 “ are comforted of God. And whether
 “ we be afflicted, it is for your consolation
 “ tion

“ tion and falvation; or whether we be
 “ comforted, it, alfo, is for your confola-
 “ tion and falvation.”

The peculiar circumftances of a people may make it proper for a minifter to be acquainted with other learning than an experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jefus. You would not fend one who fpeaks the provincial dialect of Yorkfhire, or an uncouth Welchman, however clearly he may fee and feel the importance of divine truths, to preach the gofpel in St. George’s Hanover Square. Claffical Englifh is the language of polite people, as much as French is of the fubjects of the Grand Monarque. Logic and philofophy may aid a preacher in dete&ting errors; a polite addrefs, polifhed manners, and an amiable deportment, may prevent or remove prejudices, and gain attention; but after all, the plain truths of the gofpel preached with power, and thefe only, through the bleffing of Heaven, can convert and fan&ctify the heart.

We

We have a remarkable example of this, in Crantz's history of Greenland. The Missionaries, who went into that inhospitable region, laboured incessantly for several years to convert the heathen by speaking to them of the attributes of God, of eternal salvation and damnation, and Christian duties; and found all their endeavours ineffectual, 'till they began to teach and preach Jesus Christ. " They " have experienced, says the Author, " how little is effected by first endeavour- " ing to make rational creatures of them, " then proving the existence and attri- " butes of God, and from thence inforc- " ing the consequent duties, in order the " better to prepare them to receive the " doctrine of the atonement, and to shew " its necessity. After six years unsuc- " cessful labour, they found, that the " plain testimony concerning the death " and passion of Jesus, together with its " cause and happy consequences, deliver- " ed by a heart touched with a warm and " experimental

“ experimental sense of it, is the best pre-
 “ paration, and the surest way of enlighten-
 “ ing the dark and benighted minds of
 “ the wild heathen, in order to lead them
 “ afterwards step by step into all truth.
 “ And I have been filled with the greatest
 “ amazement to behold the powerful ef-
 “ fects of the word of the cross on the
 “ most ignorant and savage heathens,
 “ who, according to their first appearance,
 “ seemed utterly incapable of compre-
 “ hending this great mystery of godliness.

“ They have been confirmed in this
 “ method of teaching, not only by their
 “ own experience of many years, but also
 “ by the example and attestations of
 “ their fellow-labourers among other hea-
 “ then nations. This method has further
 “ been found to be the best by other ser-
 “ vants of God, who have laboured in
 “ the East and West-Indies, among hea-
 “ thens of a more refined, in their way
 “ more learned, but also more corrupted
 “ turn of mind. To prove this, I will
 “ only

“ only quote a passage out of *John-Luke*
 “ *Nickamp's short account of the East-India-*
 “ *Mission*, to which Professor *Franke* wrote
 “ a preface; the words are these: The
 “ Missionaries have frequently remarked,
 “ that nothing makes such a powerful im-
 “ pression on the minds of the heathen, or
 “ makes them so desirous of receiving
 “ further information concerning the sin-
 “ fulness of human nature, and the vanity
 “ of their idols, as when one, immediate-
 “ ly at the FIRST SPEAKING TO THEM, de-
 “ clares to their hearts the gracious mes-
 “ sage concerning the free mercy of God
 “ in Christ Jesus towards the lost human
 “ race. On the contrary, our catechists,
 “ before they were rightly acquainted
 “ with the CHIEF MATTER which a mini-
 “ ster of the New-Testament has to de-
 “ clare, have made manifold experiments,
 “ *How little is to be effected amongst these hea-*
 “ *thens, by all moral representations of the*
 “ *glorious attributes of God, and of various*
 “ *duties of virtue.* Even supposing they

P

“ outwardly

" outwardly assent to all such truths,
 " still whilst their stubborn will is not
 " gained over, they only seek the more by
 " various pretences to invalidate them.
 " Likewise page 465. We observed that
 " the greatest devotion and awakening
 " was excited among them, by propound-
 " ing to them the gospel-topicks, and
 " displaying before them the sufferings of
 " Christ."

One reason, why success attends this
 preaching, rather than an attempt to
 prove the existence of a supreme Being, the
 attributes of God, and the moral obliga-
 tion of virtuous actions, I conceive to be,
 because a divine power accompanies that
 method rather than this. God has pro-
 mised that the Holy Ghost shall accom-
 pany the preaching of the cross; but no
 such promise was ever made to any other
 method of proselyting mankind to reli-
 gion and virtue. And we have had ex-
 amples in abundance, in our own nation,
 of men, who had no other learning than
 what

what they had gotten from an English bible and their own inward experience, and had no abilities to compose a regular, connected discourse, who have been the happy instruments of making many wise unto salvation.

You will not, I hope, judge from any thing I have said in this letter, that I make no account of learning. Every kind of learning is to be esteemed for its utility some way or other. Let us cultivate every branch of learning which may be accidentally useful to our profession: but let us labour and pray for that which is essential to it.

I am, S I R,

Your humble servant,

W. J.

L E T T E R XVII.

ON DIVINE INFLUENCES.

REV. SIR,

ST. Paul was sent unto the Gentiles “to turn them from darknes to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” He was to effect this great revolution in the moral world by preaching the gospel. Was this mean sufficient of itself to accomplish the end proposed? Some gentlemen are very fond of complimenting the learning and eloquence of this Apostle, and pretend to discover a great depth of erudition in his writings, and attribute the success of the gospel, for reasons which are obvious, to his great abilities. St. Paul indeed bore a part, and a very eminent part in the work of the ministry: but a great share of the work fell to other men, who had no pretensions to learning and eloquence. St. Paul himself would reject the sly compliments

ments which are paid him. He acknowledged that he was rude in speech; and that his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. See 1 Cor. 2. But miracles accompanied the preaching of the gospel; and to these, you will say, it owed its success. *Sometimes* indeed they did—They were necessary to create attention to the Apostles as persons divinely commissioned: but of themselves could work no moral cure. Multitudes saw them, who were not wrought upon by them: and the Apostles plainly declared that preaching the gospel was the mean immediately, by which all the moral wonders were wrought on the souls of men: at the same time, they protested that even this mean was wholly inadequate to the end of their ministry. “Christ sent me
 “to preach the gospel: not with wisdom
 “of words, lest the cross of Christ should
 “be made of none effect—For the preach-
 “ing of the cross is to them that perish,
 “foolishness.—For it is written, I will

“ destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will
 “ bring to nothing the understanding of
 “ the prudent. Where is the wise?
 “ where is the disputer of this world?
 “ hath not God made foolish the wisdom
 “ of this world? It pleased God by the
 “ foolishness of preaching to save them
 “ that believe.—We preach Christ cruci-
 “ fied, unto the Jews a stumbling-block,
 “ and unto the Greeks, foolishness. The
 “ foolishness of God is wiser then men;
 “ and the weakness of God is stronger than
 “ men. God hath chosen the foolish
 “ things of the world, to confound the
 “ wise; and God hath chosen the weak
 “ things of the world, to confound the
 “ things which are mighty; and base
 “ things of the world, and things which
 “ are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and
 “ things which are not, to bring to
 “ nought things that are: that no flesh
 “ should glory in his presence. But of
 “ him are ye in Christ Jesus. And I,
 “ brethren, when I came to you, came not
 “ with

“ with excellency of speech, or of wisdom,
 “ declaring unto you the testimony of
 “ God. For I determined not to know
 “ any thing among you, save Jesus Christ,
 “ and him crucified. And I was with
 “ you in weakness, and in fear, and in
 “ much trembling. And my speech, and
 “ my preaching was not with enticing
 “ words of man’s wisdom—that your
 “ faith should not stand in the wisdom of
 “ men, but in the power of God. Who
 “ is sufficient for these things? Our suf-
 “ ficiency is of God. The weapons of
 “ our warfare are mighty *through* God.
 “ The gospel is the power of God unto
 “ salvation. Who then is Paul? and
 “ who is Apollos? but ministers by
 “ whom ye believed, even as the Lord
 “ gave to every man. So then, neither
 “ is he that planteth any thing, neither he
 “ that watereth: but God that giveth the
 “ increase.” Here you have, sir, what the
 “ Apostles thought of themselves, and of

“ their ministry, and *that* to which they
 “ attributed all their success.

Learning and eloquence, reason and
 ridicule, miracles and prophecies, example
 and persuasion, novelty and interest may
 have influenced many to forsake Paga-
 nism, and to become converts to profes-
 sional Christianity: the severity of man-
 ners observed in the first disciples, may
 have disposed some of a melancholy cast,
 and others of a self-righteous spirit, to
 embrace the new religion without under-
 standing what the nature and design of it
 was. But it is not possible to account for
 the success of the gospel, in the conver-
 sion of a single handful of men to real
 Christianity, by the eloquence of the
 Apostles, or miracles, or by any other
 subordinate means. The whistling of the
 winds might turn water into wine, make
 that element to burn, and fire to freeze, as
 soon as the Apostles could make one real
 Christian merely by their preaching.—

Local

Local prejudices, or the prejudices of education may be overcome, that is, changed for other prejudices, without the assistance of divine power: but the business of the Apostles was to effect an entire moral change on the hearts of men; a change, as great as that of a new birth or a new creation. But, for this very reason, inadequate means were chosen, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

If the establishment of professional Christianity in the world were all that was intended, or necessary, all divine influences might well have ceased, as soon as Christianity triumphed over Paganism; when it was fostered by Emperors, supported by magistrates, and was countenanced by all ranks and orders of men. But then, alas! names and professions were changed, but not the nature of men; and divine influences were wanted as much as ever, perhaps more than ever, to humble the pride of man and detach him
from

from the world, when he could be carnal under the most specious appearances of spirituality. And, if human nature be the same in all ages, and under every kind of profession, and if Christianity be the same too, woe be to us, if divine influences ceased with the Apostolic age, or when Christianity became the established religion under the auspices of Constantine.

You say, "*some* people pretend to *extraordinary* inspiration:" and some people, on the other hand, say, It is a trick, which has been very much used of late years, to accuse us of *extravagant* notions and pretensions to *extraordinary* inspiration, when they mean to decry all divine influences. We do not use the term *extraordinary* in this case: yet it may be used with propriety. For the influences of the Divine Spirit on the souls of men are all *extra ordinem naturæ*; not what we have as men by any law of creation, but which are bestowed on the Church of Christ according to the covenant of grace. That
influence

influence which you, sir, pretended to, when you professed, before the bishop who ordained you, to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of a clergyman, may well enough be called *extraordinary*; because common Christians can have no pretensions to any such inspiration. If any pretend to miraculous powers, to be inspired with the knowledge of any new revelation, or of old truths without the ministry of the word and the use of the ordinary means of grace, we commit them to *Clericus* to be lashed for their folly. But, sir, they are to be justified, who insist that the same divine power is necessary to make men real Christians, and to preserve them such, now as ever; because, as hath been before observed, human nature is the same it ever was, and real Christianity is not changed, though greatly corrupted in the profession of it. I venture to add, There was not any influence of the Divine Spirit which the first Christians had, which is not now
the

the privilege of God's people; excepting the power to work miracles and to prophesy on particular occasions. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Holy Ghost is Christ's vicar on earth, to complete his great design. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Will you, sir, attempt by reason and eloquence, what the philosophers of old vainly attempted, to proselyte mankind to virtue? Can you, by any means you have, abase the pride of man? can you dissolve the stony heart? strip the self-righteous of his specious, but vain pleas? Will you attempt to break the adamantine chains of sin? and detach the depraved heart of man from the world? Can you clothe him with humility? bring him willingly to trust in foreign aid, the merit of another? relieve the afflicted conscience? inspire the doubting and despairing

ing

ing foul with hope and confidence ? and raise the sons of earth to heavenly mindedness ? “ Deck thyself now with majesty
 “ and excellency, and array thyself with
 “ glory and beauty. Cast abroad the
 “ rage of thy wrath ; and behold every
 “ one that is proud, and abase him. Look
 “ on every one that is proud and bring
 “ him low, and tread down the wicked
 “ in their place. Hide them in the dust
 “ together, and bind their faces in secret.
 “ Then will I also confess unto thee, that
 “ thine own arm can save thee,” and bring salvation to other men.

Truly, sir, our undertaking is as desperate, as any men were ever engaged in ; and were it not for the assurance of divine assistance, I would as soon labour to teach swallows to stay the winter with us, and to learn the language of men, as I would attempt to proselyte mankind to virtue. But the cause is God's ; and his blessing may be peculiarly expected : He can open the understandings of men to understand

understand the scriptures : the Divine Spirit quickens their consciences, convinces them of sin, draws them to Christ, and sanctifies their hearts unto obedience. We, sir, are his instruments, and no more than instruments, by whom he makes known his mighty power and grace.

If these be words of truth and soberness, it is fitting we should continually and earnestly pray for divine influences, both for ourselves and our congregations. It is our duty to tell them what they are by nature, and what they must become by grace, if they would be saved. And we have in this an unexceptionable example : for you know our Master spent whole nights in prayer, and said, " Except a
 " man be born again of the spirit, he can-
 " not see the kingdom of God." If any refuse to acknowledge the depravity of their nature or their guilt, we can proceed no further with them : if they confess the humbling truth of their wretched state, we must assure them of the all-sufficient grace
 of

of Jesus; but warning them at the same time, that they will never rightly understand the way of salvation; that they will either mistake or reject it, unless taught of God and guided into it by the Holy Spirit; and therefore, exhorting them to seek this blessed conductor into all the truth as it is in Jesus, by diligent prayer.

So far from pretending to extraordinary inspiration, I, sometimes, hardly dare pretend to those divine influences which are common to all real Christians: *Vix vitam per aspera duco*: but, sometimes too, my heart danceth for joy, and, in my cheerful song, I glory in the rock of my salvation. And so far from *boasting* of extraordinary influences, if they were still given to the Church of Christ, I would despise them all in comparison of the common, but more excellent gifts. Extraordinary influences may be given to a Saul, a Judas, and other reprobates. And, if I could by inspiration speak all the languages of men and Angels, and under-
stood

flood all mysteries, and could raise the dead, and remove mountains; all these miraculous powers would be no evidence to my soul that I am a child of God: they would not confer any qualification for a future state of life and happiness: they might prove a curse to me, and be means of the most fatal self-deceiving, and of making me tenfold more the child of hell than I should have been without them. The ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit are infinitely more valuable: they fit us for heaven; and are a certain seal of the eternal inheritance. The chearful mind I feel under your unjust reproaches, the charity by which I am able to forgive your unkind letter, and which disposes me to pity and pray for you, are better tokens of grace than dreams and visions, or any other impulse: these may be delusions of Satan, but sure I am, that neither Satan, nor my own imagination, could ever form in me the least degree of conformity to Christ.

I am

I am sensible, fir, how difficult it is to speak with grace of one's own self; and should not have said so much in the first person, if you had not compelled me to it. I hope an unwilling Egotist will meet with some indulgence: and, that, in future, you will not accuse me of extravagant notions, or pretensions to extraordinary inspiration; while I pretend to no more than what the circumstances of our blind, guilty, depraved nature make absolutely necessary; and while I instruct my parishioners to expect no other influences, than those, which our gracious Lord hath promised, and for which his word encourages us to pray.

Our good mother, the Church of England, (I wish she had no ungracious sons, who despise her creeds and offices) teaches us to pray, that " God, by whom the
" whole mystical body of Christ is govern-
ed

“ ed and sanctified, will *enlighten* all bishops,
 “ priests, and deacons, with the true know-
 “ ledge and understanding of his holy word
 “ —that, by the same Spirit, with which
 “ the Apostles were inspired, we may have
 “ a right judgment in all things, and ever-
 “ more *rejoice* in his holy *comforts*—that,
 “ by his *inspiration* we may *think* those
 “ things which are right; and, by his
 “ holy *guiding* may perform the same.”

Other influences than these, I never pre-
 tended to, or prayed for; and these (it
 is the sincere prayer of my heart) may you
 fully experience.—May the God of all grace,
who hath called us unto his eternal glory by
Christ Jesus, make you perfect in the know-
ledge of his truth, stablish you in the
undoubting belief of it, strengthen you
to profess and preach it, and settle you
in the blessed hope of eternal life which
rests upon it, working in you that which
is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus
 Christ,

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*Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.*

I am, R E V. S I R,

Your sincere friend,

And humble servant,

W. J.

T H E E N D.



